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*CLEG KELLY, ARAB OF THE CITY:
HIS PROGRESS AND ADVENTURES.¹*

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ADVENTURE XXVIII.

THE ENGINE-DRIVER WITH THE BEARD.

WHAT James Annan said to little Janet of Inverness on the way home, and what Janet of Inverness said to James Annan, I know. But since it concerns only themselves, with themselves I will leave it. At all events, it was no long season before they were at one. Miss Cecilia Tennant's exact share in the plot is a harder matter to apportion. But that she had a share in it far beyond the mere issuing of the invitations is certain, for Mr. Donald Iverach was heard saying to the arch-conspirator in the semi-privacy of the dusky angle of the stairs, 'But what I want to make out is, what *I* am to get out of it.'

'Virtue is its own reward,' replied Miss Celie, sententiously, 'and, besides, you make love to that sort of person so well, that it is evident you must have had a great deal of practice.'

'Now I call that a little hard on me,' said the Junior Partner, who felt that he had made a martyr of himself all the evening, and that he had, indeed, narrowly escaped the sacrificial altar.

'Wait,' he said threateningly, 'till you want me to do anything else of the kind for you.'

Celie Tennant set her pretty head the least bit to the side.

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It could not be called a cock, but it was the next thing to it. Next she pursed her mouth till it looked like a cherry.

‘ You would do it just as quick if I asked you to do it all over again,’ said Celie Tennant, looking pins and needles at Donald Iverach, till the very palms of his hands pingled.

The Junior Partner stamped his foot.

‘ Oh, hang it all !’ he cried, ‘ I believe that’s the God’s truth—I would.’

That night as he walked home, the Junior Partner, who had no gifts for the imparting of religious instruction, but who respected those who had (especially if they were pretty), wondered what could make a Sunday-school teacher act in such a perverse manner. He could not understand how it was that Celie Tennant, who upon occasion would weep over the crushing of a fly, and who was all the time worrying her life out over these young rascals of hers, could yet take pleasure in tormenting a fellow-creature, and making his very existence a burden to him.

But when he came to think of it afterwards, he had to confess that on the whole he rather liked it. In fact, that he would rather be made unhappy by Celie Tennant than that anyone else should give him the happiness of Paradise. He was a rankly foolish young man, and he would have hugged his follies if this particular one would have permitted him.

The present chronicler has, be it understood, undertaken to relate the adventures of Cleg’s companions as well as those which immediately concern the hero. But these adventures of Cleaver’s boy and his Janet of Inverness were not without direct bearing upon the fates of Cleg and of his lost friends the Kavannahs. For it so happened that Duncan Urquhart, the uncle of Janet of Inverness, came one night to see her in the kitchen of Bailie Holden. The cook was pleased with him, for he was a single man and well bearded ; in fact, the very kind of man whom all cooks adore. Housemaids, on the other hand, like clean-shaven or moustached men, and as a rule prefer to catch them younger. And this is the reason why cooks marry gardeners while housemaids marry coachmen. While nurses, having had enough of children, live to a good old age in picturesque cottages, with assured pensions and uncertain tempers, eventually dying old maids. At least, so sayeth the philosopher.

Duncan Urquhart was not the chief of a clan. He was an engine-driver in the goods department of the Greenock and South-

Eastern Railway. In the course of conversation the engine-driver, chiefly for the sake of the applause of the cook, cast about him for moving tales of the iron road on which his working hours were passed. He had settled in his mind that the cook was a wonderful woman. She could, to his certain knowledge, watch a roast, turn an omelette, taste a soup, and cast a languishing glance over her shoulder at him, all at the same time. He could not help thinking how excellent a thing it would be to come home after a grimy run on the footplate. And then, having washed, sit down in his own house to the soup, the omelette, and the joint, with (so little did he know) as many of the languishing glances as he could wish for, thrown in as a permanent asset of his home. So overcome was he by the idea, that for the moment he forgot that matters had proceeded even further with another cook in the town of Netherby, which formed his alternate stopping-place. It was a pity, he sometimes thought (for an instant only), that the laws of his country did not permit two such homes to be set up, one at either end of his daily journeyings.

Now, as one good effect of Duncan Urquhart's visit to the kitchen of Bailie Holden, the position of Janet of Inverness as kitchenmaid was made a far more tolerable one. It is a thing strongly advisable, that if the junior domestics of a house have presentable brothers or even uncles, unmarried and eligible, they should make haste to produce them. Janet of Inverness quite understood this. She knew, indeed, that Duncan was to marry his cousin Mary in the Black Isle. But she was far too wise a little girl to say anything about a family arrangement like that. And then the cook always allowed her to walk in pleasanter places for several days after the visits of her Uncle Duncan, who, as has been said, was a handsome man with a beard, and in habit very well put on and desirable.

But it is with Duncan's story that we have to do. Duncan had the English of Inverness crossed with the dialect peculiar to the Greenock and South-Eastern—a line whose engines are apple-green and gold, but the speech of whose engineers is blue, with purple patches. Not that Duncan swore before ladies, though Bailie Holden's cook would have forgiven him because of his beard. It was indeed a habit she was rather partial to, thinking it a mighty offset to the conversation of bearded men. There was no denying that Duncan's speech was picturesque. But Cleg could not help feeling that swearing of Duncan's sort was altogether

roundabout and unmanly. For himself, when he had need and occasion, he simply said 'Dam' and had done with it. Anything more savoured of superfluity to a boy of his simple tastes.

Duncan the engine-driver was talking about feats of strength.

'In my young days,' he said, 'I could toss the caber with any man. The Black Deil o' Dumfries tak' me, gin I couldna send a young tree birlin' through the air as if it had been a bit spale board. But ye should see Muckle Alick doon at Netherby Junction, where I pit up for the nicht. He's the porter there on the passenger side. An' the mid steeple is no better kenned for twenty miles round Netherby. Hands like the Day o' Judgment comin' in a thunder-cloud—heart like a wee white-faced lammie on the braes o' the Black Isle—that's Muckle Alick o' Netherby.

'As braid across the breast as if he was the gable end o' a bakehoose coming linkin' doon the street its lane. Lord bless me, when the big storm blew doon the distant signals last spring, I declare gin Muckle Alick didna juist stand on the railway brig that sits end on to the Market Hill, and signal in the trains wi' arms like the cross trees o' a man-o'-war !

'I declare to conscience it's a Guid's truth !

'Aye, an' when that puir trembling chicken-hearted crowl, Tam Mac Wheeble, that drives the Port Andrew passenger, stood still, wi' the bull's-eyes o' his wee blue engine juist looking roond the corner, an' whistled and yelled for the proper signal, pretendin' that he didna see Muckle Alick (him belongin' to another kirk), Alick cried doon at him off the brig, so that they could hear him half a mile, "Ye donnert U. P., come on wi' your auld steam-roller an' your ill-faured cargo o' Irish drovers, or I'll come doon an' harl ye a' in mysel'!"

'Fac' as daith ! I was there, talkin' to a nice bit lass that stands in the Refresh' !

'You weakly toon-bred loons' (here Duncan Urquhart looked at Cleg and Cleaver's boy) 'thinks me a strong man. But Alick, though his shooders are gettin' a wee bowed and his craw-black hair is noo but a birse o' grey, could tak' half-a-dozen like me and daud our heads thegither till we couldna speak. True as the "Reason Annexed" to the Third Commandment ! I hae seen him wi' thae een that's in my head the noo !'

'Tell us mair,' said Cleg, standing with his mouth open, for the relation of feats of strength is every unlearned man's 'Iliad.' So Duncan went on to tell mighty things of the wrath of Muckle Alick.

'But, lads, ye maun ken Alick is no a ramblin' wastrel like the rest o' us. He's an elder amang the Cameronians. Haith! a weel-learned man is Alick, an' guid company for a minister—or ony other man. And never an ill word oot o' the mouth o' him. Na, no even when yince there was twa trains at different platforms, an' the station-maister cried to Alick to tak' the tickets frae baith o' them at the same time. "Juist tak' the Port Road train yoursel', gin ye are in sic a fidge!" quoth Alick. An' it was the station-maister that swore—Alick was even mair pleased-like than usual.

'But nae man ever saw Muckle Alick angry. The ill-set callants o' the Clearin' Hoose tries whiles to provoke him. Alick, he says little—only looks at them like a big sleepy dog when the pups are yelping. Then after a while he says, "Ye are like Tam Purdy's cat, when it ate the herrin' he had for his breakfast the time he was askin' the blessin', ye are 'gettin' raither pet!'"

'And then, if they winna take a telling, Alick will grip them in his loofs, gie them a shake and a daud thegither as if he was knockin' the stour aff a couple o' books, syne stick their heads in a couple o' bags o' Indian meal, an' leave them wi' their heels in the air. But Alick is never oot o' temper. And ceevil—fresh kirked butter is no sweeter at eighteenpence a pund!'

ADVENTURE XXIX.

MUCKLE ALICK'S BANNOCKBURN.

'But what was I gaun to tell ye? Oh, aboot the Irish drovers. Ye maun ken they are no a very weel-liked class doon aboot Netherby. For they come in squads to the Market Hill on Mondays, and whiles their tongues and their sticks are no canny. Though some, I'm no denyin', are ceevil chiels. But them that I'm gaun to tell ye aboot were no that kind.

'It was the middle o' the day and Alick was away for his denner. There had been a bad market that day. Baith the marts were through hours afore their usual. So the drovers swarmed up to the station to get the afternoon train for Port Andrew. And on the platform the drinkin' frae bottles an' the swearin' was fair extraordinar'! So I am telled. Then, when the train cam' in, there was eight or nine o' the warst o' them that wadna be served

but they maun a' get into a first-class compartment. And oot o' that they wadna get !

‘The station-maister was a young man then and newly gotten on. He thocht a heap o' himsel’—as a young station-maister aye does when he first gets on the stemmed bonnet, and comes oot frae the office like Lord Almighty wi' a pen ahint his lug.

‘Weel, at ony rate, the Netherby station-maister was that kind. An' he was determined that naebody should cross him in his ain station.

““I'll juist lock them in and let them fecht it oot,” said the guard, “and by the time we are through the big cutting at the Stroan they'll hae shoggled doon as quaitie as a session.”

‘It was doubtless good advice. But the station-maister was mainly angered. He gaed to the door o' the compartment and threatened the drovers wi' the law. And they juist pelted him wi' auld sodjers and ill talk. Then he cried for a' the porters and clerks, till there was a knot o' ten or a dozen o' them aboot the door—and a' the folk in the train wi' their heads oot o' the windows, askin' what on earth (an' ither places) was keepin' the train. And doon the main line the express was fair whustling blue-fire and vengeance because the signals were against her. But nae farther could they get. The station-maister he was determined to hae the drovers oot. And they were as set no to come—being gye and weel filled wi' the weedow's cheapest market whisky that she keepit special for the drovers, for faith it wad hae scunner a decent Heelant sow ! I tried it yince and was I the waur o't for a fortnicht. But ony whisky is guid enough for an Irishman, if only ye stir plenty o' soot amang it ! They think they're hame again if they get that.

‘So here the hale traffic o' Netherby Junction was stelled for maybe a quarter o' an hour, and the station-maister was nearly daft to think what he wad hae to enter on his detention sheet. A' at ance somebody cries, “Here's Muckle Alick coming up the street.” And sure enough there he was, coming alang by the hill dyke wi' his hands in his pooches. For ye see this wasna his train, and he had ten minutes to spare. So wi' that the station-maister and the guaird and half-a-dozen lads frae the offices rins to the far side o' the platform, waving on Alick and crying on him to come on. Alick he juist looks aboot to see wha was late for the train. But no' seein' onybody he steps leisurely alang, drawin' on his weel-gaun pipe, proud-like as ye hae seen an elephant at the head o' a show.

“And the mair they cried and waved, the mair Alick looked aboot him for the man that was late for the train.

“It maun be the provost at the least, wi’ a’ this fuss,” said he to himself; “he’ll be gaun to Loch Skerrow to fish!”

At last a wee upsettin’ booking-clerk, the size o’ twa scrubbers, cam rinning and telled Alick a’ aboot the drovers and the state the station-maister was in.

“I’m no on duty at this train,” says Alick, “but I’ll come and speak to them.”

So they made way for him, and Alick gaed through the crowd at the platform like a liner through the herring-fleet below the Tail o’ the Bank.

“Lads,” says he to the drovers, “what’s this?—what’s this?”

Then they mocked and jeered at him. For it so happened that nane o’ them had been often at Netherby Market, and so no a man o’ them was acquaint wi’ Muckle Alick. Providence was no kind to the Paddies that time whatever.

“Boys,” says Alick, as canny as if he had been courtin’ his lass, “this wull never do ava’, boys. It’s no nice conduck! It’s clean ridiculous, ye ken. Ye’ll hae to come oot o’ that, boys!”

But they were fair demented wi’ drink and pridefulness at keepin’ the trains waitin’, and so they miscaa’ed Alick for a muckle nowt-beast on stilts. And yin o’ them let on to be an auctioneer, and set Alick up for sale.

“Hoo muckle for this great lumbering Galloway stirk?” says he.

“Thrip!” says another, “and dear at the money.”

“Boys,” says Alick again, like a mither soothin’ her weans when she hears the guidman’s fit, “Boys, ye’ll hae to come oot!”

But they only swore the waur at him.

“Aweel,” says Alick, “mind I hae warned ye, boys——”

And he made for the carriage-door in the face o’ a yell like a’ Donnybrook broken lowse. Then what happened after that it is no’ juist easy to tell. Alick gaed oot o’ sight into the compartment, fillin’ the door frae tap to bottom. There was a wee bit buzzing like a bee-skep when a wasp gets in. Then presently oot o’ the door o’ the first-class carriage there comes a hand like the hand o’ Providence, and draps a kickin’ drover on the platform, sprawlin’ on his wame like a paddock. Then, afore he can gather himsel’ thegither, oot flees anither and faa’s richt across him—and so on till there was a decent pile o’ Irish drovers, a’ neatly stacked cross-

and-across like sawn wood in a joiner's yaird. Certes, it was bonny to see them ! They were a' cairded through yin anither, and a' crawling and grippin' and fechtin' like crabs in a basket. It was a heartsome sicht !

‘Then, after the hindermost was drappit fealtly on the riggin,’ oot steps Muckle Alick—edgeways, of course, for the door wasna wide aneuch for him except on the angle. He was, if onything, mair calm and collected than usual. Muckle Alick wasna angry. He juist clicked his square key in the lock o’ the door and stood lookin’ doon at the crawlin’ pile o’ drovers. Folk says he gied a bit smile, but I didna see him.

“Ye see, boys, ye had to come oot !” said Muckle Alick.’

ADVENTURE XXX.

HOW GEORDIE GRIERSON’S ENGINE BROKE ITS BUFFER.

‘HOO-R-RAY !’ shouted Cleg Kelly and Cleaver’s boy together, till the cook and little Janet of Inverness smiled at their enthusiasm.

‘But there’s mair,’ said the engine-driver.

‘It canna be better than that !’ said Cleg, to whom the tale was as good as new potatoes and salt butter.

‘It’s better !’ said the engine-driver, who knew that nothing holds an audience and sharpens the edge of its appetite better than a carefully cultivated expectancy.

‘It was that same day after the Port Andrew train got away, when the cowed drovers were sent to the landing-bank to wait for their cattle train, and the carriage that was coupled on to it for their transport. The driver o’ the main line express was Geordie Grierson, an’ he was no well-pleased man to be kept waitin’ twenty minutes with his whistle yellyhooin’ bluefire a’ the time. He prided himsel’ special on rinnin’ to the tick o’ the clock. So as soon as the signal dropped to clear he started her raither sharp, and she cam’ into the station under a head of steam some deal faster than he had intended. Ye could hae heard the scraichin’ o’ the auld wood brakes a mile an’ mair. But stop her they couldna. And juist as Geordie Grierson’s engine was turnin’ the curve to come past the facing points to the platform, what should we see but a wee bit ragged laddie, carryin’ a bairn, coming staggerin’ cross the metals to the near bank. Every single person on the platform cried to him to gang back. But the laddie couldna see Geordie’s engine for

the way he was carryin' the bairn, and maybe the noise o' the folk cryin' mazed him. So there he stood on the four-foot way, richt between the rails, and the express-engine fair on him.

'It cam' that quick our mouths were hardly shut after crying out, and our hearts had nae time to gang on again, before Muckle Alick, wha was standin' by the side o' the platform, made a spang for the bairns—as far as we could see, richt under the nose o' the engine. He gripped them baith in his airms, but he hadn'a time to loup clear o' the far rail. So Muckle Alick juist arched a back that was near as braid as the front of the engine itsel', and he gied a kind o' jump to the side. The far buffer o' the engine took him in the broad o' his hinderlands and whammed him and the bairns in a heap ower on the grass on the far bank.

'Then there was a sough amang us wi' the drawing in o' sae mony breaths, for, indeed, we never looked for yin o' them ever to stir again. Geordie Grierson managed to stop his train after it had passed maybe twenty yairds. He was leanin' oot o' the engine cubby half his length an' lookin' back, wi' a face like chalk, at Muckle Alick and the weans on the bank.

'But what was oor astonishment to see him rise up wi' the bairns baith in his ae airm, and gie his back a bit dust wi' the back o' the ither as if he had been dustin' flour off it.

"Is there ocht broken, think ye, Geordie?" Muckle Alick cried anxiously to the engine-driver.

"Guid life, Alick, are ye no killed?" said the engine-driver. And, loupin' frae his engine, Geordie ran doon, if ye will believe it, greeting like a very bairn. And 'deed, to tell the truth, so was the maist feck o' us.

"Killed?" says Alick; "weel, no that I ken o'!"

'And he stepped across the rails wi' the twa weans laughin' in his airms, for a' bairns are fond o' Alick. And says he, "I think I'll pit them in the left luggage office till we get the express cleared." So he did that, and gied them his big turnip watch to play wi'. And syne he took the luggage over and cried the name o' the station, as if he had done nocht that day forbye eat his denner.

'Then there cam' a lassie rinnin', wi' a loaf in her airms, and lookin' every road for something.

"Did ye see twa bairns? Oh, my wee Hugh, what's come to ye?" she cried.

"Ye'll find them in the luggage office, I'm thinkin', lassie," says Alick.'

And here the engine-driver of the goods train rose to depart. But his audience would not permit him.

‘And what cam’ o’ the bairns?’ cried Cleg, white with anxiety, ‘and what was their names, can ye tell me?’

‘Na, I never heard their names, if they had ony,’ said Duncan Urquhart. ‘They were but tinkler weans, gaun the country. But Alick could tell ye, nae doot. For I saw him gang doon the street wi’ the wee boy in his hand, and the lass carryin’ the bairn. An’ the folk were a’ rinnin’ oot o’ their doors to shake hands wi’ Alick, and askin’ him if he wasna sair hurt?’

“‘Na,’ says he; “I’ll maybe a kennin’ stiff for a day or twa, but there’s nocht serious wrang—except wi’ the spring o’ the engine buffer! That’s gye sair shauchelt!”

‘And guid nicht to ye a’, an’ a guid sleep. That’s a’ I ken,’ said Duncan Urquhart from the kitchen door, where he was saying good-bye to the cook in a manner calculated to advance materially the interests of his niece, Janet of Inverness.

‘And I’m gaun the morn’s mornin’ to see Muckle Alick!’ cried Cleg. And he went out with the engine-driver.

ADVENTURE XXXI.

THE ‘AWFU’ WOMAN.’

A SORE heart had Vara Kavannah as she sat in the hut in Callendar’s yard the night her mother had appeared at the gate of Hillside Works.

‘I can never go back among them—no, never, never!’ said Vara to herself again and again.

And already she saw the sidelong glance, the sneering word thrown over the shoulder, as the companions from whom she had held herself somewhat aloof reminded her of her mother’s disgrace. ‘O father, father, come back to us—come back to us!’ she cried over and over again till it became a prayer.

She sat with her hands before her face so long that little Hugh repeatedly came and stirred her arm, saying ‘What ails sister? Hugh Boy not an ill boy!’

Vara Kavannah’s thoughts ran steadily on Liverpool, to which her father had gone to find work. She remembered having seen trains with carriages marked ‘Liverpool’ starting from the rickety

old station at the end of Princes Street. She knew that they went out by Merchiston and Calder. That must, therefore, be the way to Liverpool. Vara did not remember that it must also be the way to a great many other places, since many carriages with other superscriptions passed out the same way.

As it darkened in the little construction hut, Vara listlessly rose to set the room to rights, and to give the baby its bottle. Nothing now seemed any use, since her mother had come back into her life. Yet Vara did not cry, for that also was no use. She had lost her place at the works, or at least she could never go back any more. Her world was at an end.

Hugh Boy still lingered outside, though it was growing latish, and the swallows that darted in and out of the stacked rafters and piled squares of boards began one by one to disappear from the vaulted sky. Hugh was busy watering the plants, as he had seen Cleg do. And he kept one hand in his pocket and tried to whistle as like his model as possible. Vara was just laying the baby in its cot when she heard a scream of pain from Hugh at the door.

‘Mercy me !’ said she, ‘has the laddie tumbled and hurt himself?’

She flew to the open door, which was now no more than a dusky oblong of blue-grey. A pair of dark shapes stood in front of her. Little Hugh lay wailing on the ground. A hard clenched hand struck Vara on the mouth, as she held up her hands to shield the baby she had carried with her in her haste, and a harsh thick voice screamed accumulated curses at her.

‘I hae gotten ye at last, ye scum, you that sets yourself up to be somebody. You that dresses in a hat and feather, devil sweep ye ! Come your ways in, lad, and we will soon take the pride out of the likes o’ her, the besom !’

The man hung back and seemed loth to have part in the shame. But Sal Kavannah seized him by the hand and dragged him forward.

‘This is your new faither, Vara,’ she said ; ‘look at him. He is a bonny-like man beside your poor waff wastrel runnagate faither, Sheemus Kavannah !’

The man of whom Sal Kavannah spoke was a burly low-browed ruffian, with the furtive glance of one who has never known what it is to have nothing to conceal.

But Vara thought he did not look wholly bad.

‘Come in, mother !’ she said at last in a low voice. Then she

went out to seek for Boy Hugh, who had run into the dark of the yard and darned himself safely among the innumerable piles of wood, which stood at all angles and elevations in Callendar's wide quadrangle.

‘Hugh! Boy Hugh!’ she cried. And for a long time she called in vain. At last a low and fearful voice answered her from a dark corner, in which lay the salvage of a torn-down house.

‘Is she gane away?’ said the Boy Hugh.

‘No, but ye are to come hame,’ said Vara, holding the babe closer to her bosom.

‘Then Hugh Boy is no comin’ hame the nicht till the “awfu’ woman” is gane away!’ said the lad, determinedly.

‘Come, boy, come,’ she said again; ‘my heart is wae for us a’. But come wi’ your Vara!’

‘Na, Hugh Boy is no comin’. Ye will hae to *hist* me oot wi’ big dogs afore I will come hame to the “awfu’ woman,” said Hugh Boy, who was mightily set when his mind was made up.

So Vara had perforce to drag her feet back to the horrors which awaited her within the construction hut. The man and her mother had been pledging one another when she entered. A couple of black bottles stood between them, and Sal Kavannah looked up at her daughter with a fleering laugh.

‘Aye, here she comes that sets up for being better than your mother! But we’ll show you before we are through with you, my man and me, you——’

However it does not enter into the purpose of this tale to blacken a page with the foul excrement of a devilish woman’s hate of her own child. The Scripture holdeth—the mother may forget. She may indeed have no compassion on the child of her womb. And Vara Kavannah sat still and listened, till the burning shame dulled to a steady throbbing ache somewhere within her. The woman’s threats of future torture and outrage passed idly over her, meaningless and empty. The man drank steadily, and grew ever silenter and more sullen; for, to his credit be it said, the situation was not to his taste, and he looked but seldom at Vara. The girl sat clasping the babe to her bosom with a secret sense that in little Gavin she had her best and indeed her only protector. For even the very bad man in his senses will hardly hurt an infant—though a bad woman will, as we may read in the records of our police courts.

So Vara sat till the man reeled to the door carrying the

unfinished bottle with him, and Sal Kavannah, her orgie logically completed, sank in a foetid heap on the floor with the empty one beside her.

The man as he stumbled out left the door open, and in a little while Vara could hear Boy Hugh's plaintive voice, asking from the wood-pile in the corner whether the 'awfu' woman' was gone yet.

As Vara sat and listened all through the short hours of that midsummer night to the clocks of the city churches, the stertorous breathing of her mother and the babe's occasional feeble wail were the only sounds within the hut itself. But Boy Hugh's plaint detached itself fitfully from the uneasy hum of the midnight city without. A resolve, new-born indeed, but seemingly old and determinate as the decrees of the God she had learned about in the Catechism, took hold upon her.

It seemed to Vara that it did not matter if she died—it did not even matter whether Hugh and Gavin died, if only she could find her father, and die far away from her mother and all this misery.

The girl was so driven to the last extremity by the trials of the day and the terrors of the night that she rose and put on her hat as calmly as though she had been going for a walk with Cleg and the children across the park. As calmly also she made her preparations, stepping carefully to and fro across her mother on the floor. She put all the scraps of bread that were left from Cleg's windfall into her pocket, together with the baby's feeding bottle and a spare tube. Then she added Hugh's whistle and a certain precious whip with a short bone handle and a long lash, which Cleg had given him. Vara was sure that Hugh Boy would cry for these, and want to go back if she did not take them with her. She had nothing of her own to take, except the indiarubber umbrella ring which Cleg Kelly had given her. So she took that, though she had never possessed an umbrella in her life. Groping in Gavin's crib, she found her shawl, and wrapped it about her with a knowing twist. Then she deftly took up the baby. The shawl went over her left shoulder and was caught about her waist at the right side, in a way which all nurses and mothers know, but which no man can ever hope to describe. The babe was still asleep, and Vara's tender touch did not awake it as she stepped out into the night to walk to Liverpool to find her father.

But as a first step she must find Boy Hugh. And that young man was exceedingly shy. He had got it in his obstinate little head that his sister wished to drag him back to the 'awfu' woman.'

It was not, therefore, till Vara had managed to persuade him in the most solemn way that she had no intention of ever going back that he consented to accompany her upon her desperate quest.

At last Boy Hugh took her hand and the three bairns left Callendar's yard behind them for ever. What happened there that night after they left we already know. It is with the children's wanderings that we now have to do.

ADVENTURE XXXII.

MAID GREATHEART AND HER PILGRIMS.

It was grey day when the children fared forth from the city. Vara's chief anxiety was lest they should not be able to escape out of the town before the light came, so that some officious neighbour might be able to direct her enemy upon their track. It was not long before they emerged out of the side-alleys on a broad paved street which led towards the south.

Vara paused and asked a policeman if this was the way to Liberton.

'And what are you going to do at Liberton so early in the morning?' said the policeman. He asked because he was a Lothian man, who always puts a second question before he can bring himself to answer the first.

'We are gaun to see our faither,' said Vara, speaking the truth.

'Weel,' said the policeman, 'that is the road to Liberton. But if I was you I would wait till the milk-cairts were drivin' hame. Then I could get ye a lift to Liberton fine.'

He was a kind-hearted 'poliss,' and in fact the same officer who had looked over the screen by the watch-shelter behind which Tyke was spinning his yarns to Cleg Kelly.

So that—thus strange is the working of events when they take the reins into their own hands—at the very moment when Cleg Kelly was sleeplessly turning over in his mind the problem of the life-fate of Vara and the children by the dying fire at the Grange crossing, Vara herself with the baby on her arm was trudging down the pavement opposite. As she passed she looked across, and only the timbered edge of the shelter prevented her from seeing Cleg Kelly.

Thus, without the least hindrance or observation, the three

children escaped out of their thrice-heated fiery furnace into the cool of the country hedges and upon the clean hard surface of the upland roads.

With the inevitable instinct of hunted things Vara turned aside whenever she heard the brisk clapper of the hoofs of a milk-cart, or the slower rumble of a market waggon. For she knew that it was of such early comers into the city that questions would be asked. So, when Cleg set about his inquisition, he was foiled by the very forethought which had only desired to defeat an enemy, not to mystify a friend.

Thus hour by hour they left quiet, kindly red-tiled villages behind, set in heartsome howes and upon windy ridges. And, as they went ever forwards, morning broadened into day; day crept dustily forward to hot noon; noon drowsed into afternoon, with the scent of beanfields in the air, dreamily sweet. Vara's arm that held the baby grew numb and dead. Her back ached acutely from the waist downwards as though it would break in two. Sometimes the babe wailed for food. Little Hugh dragged leadenly upon her other hand, and whinged on, with the wearisome iteration of the corncrake, that he wished to go back to Callendar's yard, till Vara had to remind him, because nothing else would stay his plaining, of the 'awfu' woman' waiting for him there.

Vara did not rest long that whole day. They sat down as seldom as possible, and then only for a few minutes. Vara poured a little of the water from a wayside spring upon the crumbs that were left, and gave them to little Gavin, mixing them with the remaining milk in his bottle. Hugh begged incessantly that Vara would let him take off his boots and walk barefoot. But his sister knew that he would certainly become lame in a mile or two. Yet there might have been pleasure in it too, for they sat down in the pleasantest places all that fine, bough-tossing day. The shadows were sprinkled on the grassy hillsides, like a patchwork quilt which Vara had once seen in their house when Hugh was very little, but which had long ago become only a memory and a lost pawn-ticket.

Never before had the children seen such quaint woodland places—nooks where the rabbits tripped and darted, or sat on the bank washing faces pathetically innocent and foolish. Little runnels of water trickled down the gullies of the banks and dived under the road. But for Vara there was no enjoyment, no resting all that day. They soon spent their store of food. By noon Hugh had eaten all the cold potatoes. The babe had taken, at first with difficulty,

then, under the pressure of hunger, greedily, the thin water and milk with the crushed crumbs in it which Vara had made at the brook-side. So that also was finished. Hunger began, not for the first time, to grip them.

But they could not rest long. In a little, just as Hugh Boy was beginning to drop asleep and lean heavily against Vara, there came again upon her without warning a terrible fear. She looked down the road they had come, and she seemed to see the cruel eyes of her mother, to hear again the foul threats of the life she was to be compelled to lead for 'setting herself up to be better than her mother,' all the words which she had listened to during those last hours of terror and great darkness in the old construction hut.

So Vara shook Hugh awake, stroking his cheeks down gently till his eyes opened. She settled the shawl over her other shoulder, and the bairns were soon on their way again. The dusty road beneath appeared to stream monotonously between their feet, and so weary did they grow that sometimes they seemed to be only standing still. Sometimes, on the contrary, they appeared to be going forward with incredible speed. Vara bore the aching of her carrying-arm till it became agony unspeakable, and the weight of Gavin dragged on her very brain. Then, for a treat, she would shift him to the other arm, and for a few minutes the keen twingeing ache deadened to a dull ache, as the tired wrist and elbow dropped to her side. But soon in the other arm the same stounding agony began.

Still the children fared on, spurred forward by the fear of that which was behind them. The thought and hope of their father had greatly died out of Vara's mind, though not altogether. But the mighty instinct of hiding from days and nights like those which had gone over her head recently drove her restlessly forward. Yet she began sadly to acknowledge that, though she might be able to stumble on a little longer that night, little Hugh could not go much further. He began to lag behind at every turn, and whenever they stopped a moment he fairly dropped asleep on his feet, and his head fell flaccidly against her side.

The bells of a little town on the slope of a hill were just striking six and the mill-folk were streaming homeward, when the children had their first great piece of luck. They were just by a stone watering-trough at the curve of a long brae, when a smart light cart with yellow wheels came past. It was driven by a young man, who sat, looking very bright and happy, with his sweetheart beside him. As the pair came slowly up the brae they had been

talking about the children, whom they could see dragging on before them weary-foot, sick with pain and weariness.

Perhaps the young man's heart was touched. Or mayhap his sweetheart asked him to give them a penny, and he wished to show his generosity. But in either case certain it is that as he passed up the hill he nodded brightly back to the children and threw them a coin. It rolled on its edge to Vara's feet, who stooped and picked it up, solacing her independent soul as the silver lay apparent in her hands by telling herself that she had not asked for it. Her mother had found all her savings the night before, and had emptied them into the hand of her companion, out of the cup in which they had stood on the shelf which served for the mantelpiece of the construction hut. So that but for this happy young man's sixpence Vara and her charges were absolutely penniless.

ADVENTURE XXXIII.

THE BABES IN THE HAYSTACK.

BUT even Hugh brightened at the sight of the silver, and when Vara proposed to go back and buy something for them while he stayed with Gavin and gathered him flowers to play with, the lad said determinedly, 'Hugh Boy come too!'

So they all went back to the village. They stood looking long and wistfully into the shop-windows, for what to buy was so momentous a question that it took them some time to decide. At last Vara made up her mind to have twopence-worth of stale bread at a baker's. She was served by the baker's wife, who, seeing the girl's weary look, gave her a fourpenny loaf of yesterday's baking for her coppers, together with some salt butter in a broad cabbage leaf into the bargain. Vara's voice broke as she thanked the woman, who had many bairns of her own, and knew the look of trouble in young eyes. Then at another shop Vara bought a pennyworth of cheese, which (as she well knew) satisfies hunger better than any other food. Then came a pennyworth of milk for the baby, with which she filled his bottle, and gave what was over to Hugh Boy, who drank it out of the shopkeeper's measure.

When the children came out, Vara took Hugh by the hand, and they marched past the baker's without stopping. For the boy had set his love upon a certain gingerbread lion with a pair of lack-lustre eyes of currants, and as they passed the baker's shop he

set up a whining whimper to have it. But his sister marched him swiftly past before the dews in his eyes had time to fall. The baker's wife had come to the door to look after them, and seeing Hugh Boy's backward-dragging look, she sent her little girl after them with the very gingerbread lion of Hugh's dreams. Hugh Boy stood speechless, open-mouthed with thankfulness. The little girl smiled at his surprise.

'We hae lots o' them at our house,' she said, and hurried back to her mother.

They mounted the hill once more and sat on the grassy bank by the side of the watering trough, into which a bright runlet of water fell, and in which little stirring grains of sand dimpled and danced.

Never was anything sweeter than the flavour of yesterday's bread, except the gingerbread lion, from which Hugh had already picked one black currant eye, leaving a yellow pitted socket which leered at him with horrid suggestiveness of stomach-ache. But hunger-ache was Hugh Boy's sole enteric trouble, so that the suggestion was lost upon him.

The water of the hill spring, splashing into the stone trough, sounded refreshing beyond expressing. The baby dreamed over his bottle, and lay with his eyes fixed on the clear heavens above—from which, if all tales be true, he had come to a world of whose kindness he had had so little experience since his arrival.

For the first time that day Vara took a bite for herself and many a draught of the dimpling springwater, whose untiring crystal rush into the basin it was so pleasant to watch. Then Vara washed Hugh's feet and her own in the overflow of the trough, just at the place where the burn ran under the road. On Hugh Boy's feet was a painful pink flush, but no blister appeared. On her own feet, however, there were two or three. Vara was glad that Hugh was fit for his journey.

They started again, and, with the refreshment of the food and the rest, they managed to make two or three miles further before the dark fell. But soon it was evident that the three wanderers could go little further that night. The babe's eyes were long closed with sleep, and poor little Hugh could only keep awake and stagger on by constantly rubbing his knuckles into the corners of his eyes.

They were now on a high wild moor, and there was no house within sight. They still went onward, however, blindly and painfully. The roadsides trailed past them black and indistinct till they came

to a farmhouse. They could see tall buildings against the skies and hear the lash of an unseen mill-stream over a wheel into a pool. A blackcap sang sweetly down in some reeds by the mill-dam.

Vara did not dare to knock at the door of the house. She was just about to go into the farmyard in search of a shed to lie down in, when she remembered that she had heard from Cleg how there were always fierce dogs about every farmhouse. For Hugh's sake she could not risk it. Instead of going forward, therefore, she groped her way with one hand into a field where there were many stacks of hay and corn. Vara could tell by the rustling as her hand passed over them. Soon she came to a great stack in a kind of covered shed, which stood between wooden posts like trees. One end of it was broken down and cut into platforms. Vara mounted upon one with the baby, and reached down a hand for Boy Hugh. For the last few miles, indeed ever since it grew dark, Hugh had been more than half asleep, and his weariful sobbing had worn down to a little clicking catch in his throat, which still recurred at intervals. It was by the sound that Vara found him. She leaned over as far as she dared, and drew him up beside her. He was asleep in her arms before she could lay him down.

Vara thought the people of the farm would not be very angry in the morning if she pulled out a little of the hay.

'It is for the baby's sake!' she said, to excuse herself.

So she scooped out of the higher step of the stack where it was broadest a little cave among the hay, and into this she thrust Boy Hugh gently, putting his legs in first and leaving only his head without. Then she rolled the babe and herself in the shawl and crawled in beside him. She drew the hay close like a coverlet about them. She listened awhile to Hugh Boy's breathing, which still had the catch of bygone tears in it. She kissed Gavin, closed her eyes, and instantly fell asleep herself. Vara said no prayers. But the incense of good deeds and sweetest essential service went up to God from that haystack.

ADVENTURE XXXIV.

THAT OF MARY BELL, BYRE LASS.

THE morning came all too soon, with a crowing of cocks and the clashing hurrahs of the rooks, circling up from their nesting in the tall trees. But the tired children slept on. The life of the farm

began about them, with its cheerful sounds of clinking head-chains as the cattle came in, and of tinkling harness as the teams went afield. But still the children did not wake. It was not till Mary Bell, byre lass, came to get an armful of fodder from the stack that they were found.

‘Lord, preserve us! what’s that?’ she cried when, with her knees upon the step of the stack, she saw the children—Vara’s wearied face turned to the babe, and the dew damp on the white cheeks of Boy Hugh.

‘I maun fetch the mistress!’ said Mary Bell.

And then these two women stood and marvelled at the children.

‘Mary,’ said the mistress of the farm, ‘d’ye mind the text last Sabbath?’

Mary Bell looked indignantly at her employer.

‘How do ye think I can mind texts wi’ as mony calves to feed?’ she asked, like one of whom an unfair advantage is taken.

‘O Mary!’ said her mistress, ‘how often hae I telled you no to set your mind on the vainties o’ this wicked world?’

‘An’ whatna ane do ye pay me for?—to keep mind o’ texts or to feed the calves?’ asked the byre lass, pertinently.

‘Mary,’ said the other, ignoring the argument, ‘the text was this: “I will both lay me down and sleep”—dod, but I declare I forget the rest o’t,’ she concluded, breaking down with some ignominy.

‘In the land o’ the leal,’ suggested Mary Bell, either wickedly or with a real desire to help. Her superior promptly accepted the emendation.

‘That’s it!’ she said. ‘Is it no bonny to look at thae bairns and mind the text, “I will both lay me down and sleep, in the land o’ the leal”?’

‘I’ll wauken them,’ said practical Mary Bell, ‘and bring them into the hoose for some breakfast.’

‘Na, na,’ said her mistress, ‘ye maunna do that. What wad the guidman say? Ye ken he canna be doin’ wi’ folk that gang the country. A wee drap o’ yestreen’s milk noo—or the scrapins o’ the parritch pot!’

‘Aye,’ said Mary Bell, ‘“in the land o’ the leal.” Ye had better gang ben and look up the text, mistress; I’ll attend to the bairns.’

‘Aye, do that,’ said the good wife, with perfect unconsciousness of Mary Bell’s sarcasm, ‘but be sparin’. Mind ye, this is hard times for farm folk! And we canna spend gear and graith recklessly on unkenned bairns.’

'Ye will be free o' that crime, mistress,' murmured Mary, as her mistress took her way into the house; 'gin ye could tak' a' that ye hae saved wi' ye, what a bien and comfortable doon-sitting wad ye no hae in heeven! Itherwise, I'm nane sae sure—in spite o' your texts.'

Then Mary sat down and took the children one by one, touching their faces to make them waken. Vara sat up suddenly, with wild eyes and a cry of fear. In her terror she clasped the baby so hard that it waked and cried. With the other hand she brushed away the elf locks about her own eyes. But her heart stilled its fluttering as she caught the kindly eyes of Mary Bell, set in a brown sun-coarsened face of broad good humour.

'O,' said Vara, 'I thought ye were my mother!'

And Mary Bell, who, though a byre lass and daughter of toil, was born with the gentle heart of courtesy within her, refrained from asking why this wandering girl should be so greatly afraid of her own mother.

'Are you hungry?' she said, instead.

And little Boy Hugh awoke, rolled out of the hay, and shook himself like a young puppy. He stretched his arms wide, clasping and unclasping his fingers.

'I'm *that* hungry!' he said, as if he had heard Mary Bell's words in a dream.

'That's answer enough!' said the byre lass. 'Certes, ye are a bonny laddie; come here to me.'

And Mary Bell, who was born to love children and to bear them, snatched him up and kissed him warmly and roughly. But Hugh wriggled out of her arms, and as soon as he found himself on the ground he wiped his mouth deliberately and ungratefully with the back of his hand.

'Hae ye ony pieces and milk for wee boys?' he said.

The byre lass laughed.

'Ye like pieces and milk better than kisses,' said she. 'Hoo does that come?'

'Pieces and milk are better for ye!' said Boy Hugh, stating an undeniable truth.

'It's a peety,' said Mary Bell, sententiously, 'that we dinna aye ken what's guid for us.' And she was thoughtful for some moments. 'Come awa', bairns,' she said, taking Gavin from Vara, and carrying him herself into a milk house, which was filled with a pleasant smell of curds and cheese.

Hugh Boy went wandering about, wondering at the great tin basins filled with milk to the brim, some fresh and white, and some covered smoothly with a thick yellow coating of cream.

‘I never thocht there was as muckle milk in the world !’ said Boy Hugh.

So here the children ate and drank, and were refreshed. And as she set before them each new dainty—farles of cake, thick new scones, milk with the cream still generously stirred amongst it, fresh new milk yet warm from the cow for Gavin, Mary Bell said: ‘This is better than mindin’ a text ! Sirce me, heard ye ever the like o’ it—“To the land o’ the leal ?” An’ she took it a’ in, She reads a’ the Bible ever she reads between her sleeps in the kirk, I’se warrant. Wait till I see Jamie Mailsetter ; I’ll hae a rare bar to tell him !’

It was an hour after, much comforted and refreshed, with a back-load of provisions and one of Mary Bell’s hardly-earned shillings, that the wanderers set out. They continued to wave her their farewells till they were far down the loaning.

And they might well be sorry, for there were not many people so kind and strong-hearted as Mary Bell to be met with between the Town of Pilgrimage and the City of the Twelve Foundations. And some of these are rough-handed and weather-beaten men and women, who work out their Christianity in feeding calves and bairns instead of parading texts, keeping the word of God in their hearts according to the commandment.

ADVENTURE XXXV.

THE KNIGHT IN THE SOFT HAT.

AND so their second day was a good day, as most days are that are well begun with a good breakfast. For, together with a good conscience, that makes all the difference. And especially when you are Hugh Boy’s age, for then even the conscience does not so much matter.

Hugh Boy had never been in the country before, and, being a lad of much observation, he had to watch all that there was there. And there were many things for Hugh Boy to see that day. Robin redbreasts peeped with their summer shyness upon them from the low bushes on the banks. Sparrows pecked among flower patches, instead of at the mud in the streets, as Hugh Boy

had always seen them do before. There was a big bird which floated above the farmyard of one of the farms they passed. Hugh wondered what sort of bird it could be. He heard a motherly hen, which had been scraping and clucking among the dust when they came round the corner, suddenly give a strange screech, just like that which Vara had given the other night when the 'awfu' woman' came to their door. He saw the hen droop her wings and crouch in the dust, keeping her beak up in the air, her timid eyes glittering with anger.

Hugh Boy questioned Vara, but Vara had the baby to attend to, and answered that it was just a bird. But soon the big shadow on the sky with the outstretched wings floated away, and the hen went back to its contented picking. The children also went along the wayside to-day with many more rests and lingerings. For they had no longer the instant spur of pursuit driving them on.

They stopped to take their meal by a little bridge, under which a moorland burn ran bickering down to join a big river which flowed to the distant sea.

They sat down in the dark of the arch, and Vara had spread out all the provision which her kind friend, Mary Bell, had given her before she saw that at the other end a young man was sitting close in by the wall. At sight of him Vara started, and would have put her bread and milk back again. But the man cried over to her, 'Not so fast, my pretty dears ; there's another hungry stomach here.'

'You are welcome to a share o' what we have,' said Vara, who had been too often hungry herself not to know the pain it meant.

The youth came and sat down by them. He was a lean and unwholesome-looking vagrant. The whites of his eyes had turned an unpleasant lead colour, while the pupils were orange-coloured, like the stripes on a tiger's skin.

Vara gave him one of the largest of Mary Bell's scones, and some of the butter they had got from the baker's wife the day before. The young man ate these up greedily, and reached out his hand for more. Vara offered him some of the loaf which she had bought.

'None o' that dry choko-tuck for me ; gimme the soft bread !' said he, rudely snatching at it.

Vara told him civilly that it was not for herself that she wanted to keep it, but to break up in the baby's milk.

In spite of her pitiful protest, however, the young man snatched

the scone and ate it remorselessly, looking at Vara all the time with evil eyes, and smiling a smirk of satisfaction. There was no snivelling weakness about him. Hugh Boy never took his eyes off him. Then, when he had finished, the lout rose, coolly stuffed the remainder of their provision into his pocket, and came over towards Vara with his hand stretched out. He caught her by the wrist and sharply twisted her arm.

‘Shell out your tin,’ he said. ‘Out with it now, and no bones about it!’

Vara bore the pain as well as she could without crying out. Suddenly, however, the rascal dropped her hand, and snatched Gavin from her arms. He stood on the edge of the ravine over which the bridge went, holding the child, and threatened to throw him over if she did not give him all the money she had. He was, of course, as he told himself, only ‘kidding’ her, but Vara was in wild terror for Gavin. Her particular evil genius had never hesitated to carry out such threatenings.

‘I will! I will!’ cried Vara. And she took the byre lass’s shilling out of her pocket and gave it to the man.

‘Any more?’ said he. ‘Yes, I see there is. Out with it!’

And Vara drew out the remainder of the sixpence which the young lover had thrown to her from his cart yesterday.

Then the cruel hobbledehoy tossed her the child with a laugh, and sprang sharply round the parapet of the bridge. Pale as ivory, Vara ran after him to watch. The rascal was quite at his ease, for he stopped to light his pipe and take a drink out of a little square bottle. This he stowed away in the tails of his coat, which were very long. Then he waved his hand humorously at Vara and Boy Hugh as they stood by the arch of the bridge.

A tall, well-built young fellow, was coming down the road, and a hope sprang up in Vara’s mind that he might do something for her. The stranger’s round soft hat and dark clothes marked him for a clergyman. But he swung his stick and whistled, which were new things to Vara in one of his cloth.

At sight of him the thief pulled down the corners of his mouth and put on his regulation mendicant’s whine.

‘For the love o’ God, sir, help a poor fellow that’s dyin’ o’ hunger. I’ve walked fifty miles without a bite—hope to die if I haven’t, sir. I wouldn’t tell you a lie, sir.’

The stalwart young minister smiled, and gave his stick another swing before he spoke.

'You have not walked five miles without drinking, anyway, as my nose very plainly tells me. And your pipe is setting your coat on fire at this very moment!'

The hobbledehoy plucked his lighted pipe out of his pocket and set his thumb in the bowl.

'You are one o' the good kind,' he persisted; 'you are not the sort that would deny a poor chap a sixpence because he takes a draw of tobacco when he can get it?'

'Not a bit,' said the minister, good-humouredly; 'I can take a whiff myself. But I don't ask anybody else to pay for it. It's a fine business, yours, my lad. But I'm not keeping a free rum and tobacco shop. So you had best tramp, my man.'

At this the tramp began to pour forth a volley of the most foul-mouthed abuse, cursing all parsons for rogues, liars, and various other things. The minister listened patiently for some time.

'Now,' he said, when at last there came a pause, 'I have given you your say—away with you! And if I hear another foul word out of your mouth, I will draw my stick soundly across your back.'

'Oh!' said the other, impudently, 'I thought you were one of the softish kind—the sort that when you smote them on the one cheek, turned the other also.'

The young man in the round hat squared his shoulders.

'Did anyone smite me on the one cheek?' he asked. 'If they did, I didn't know it. Perhaps you would like to try?'

And he came nearer to the rascal, who drew off as if not at all inclined to make the experiment. He made no reply.

'But,' said the minister, 'since you are so ready with your Scripture, you will not object to another text, just as good, and more suitable for application to the like of you. It is—"A rod for the fool's back!"'

And with that he lifted his stick and brought it down on the young rough's shoulders with the swing of a cricketer cutting a high ball to the boundary.

Never was there a more astonished scoundrel. He turned on the instant and ran. But Vara was close beside them by this time.

'He stole my money!' she cried; 'catch him! O dinna let him away!'

The young minister clapped his hat firmly on the back of his head and gave chase. The thief was for the moment the swifter, but he had not the wind nor the training of his opponent.

‘Stop!’ cried the pursuer.

The thief glanced about, and seeing the stick he had tasted before hovering in the air, he dropped in a heap across the path to trip his pursuer. The minister cleared him in his stride and turned upon him. The rascal kept perfectly still till his captor approached. Then suddenly he shot out his foot in a vicious kick. But the young fellow in the round hat had been in France and knew all about that game. He caught the foot in his hand and turned the fellow over on his back. Vara came panting up.

‘Give this girl her money,’ said the minister. ‘How much was it, my lassie?’

‘It was a shilling and two pence,’ said Vara.

‘Out with it or I’ll go through you!’ said the minister. And the thick stick again hovered an ultimatum.

So Vara got her money, and without even a parting curse the cowed and frightened rascal took himself off down the road at a slow trot, keeping his eyes on the ground all the way.

Vara was left alone with her knight of the soft hat.

ADVENTURE XXXVI.

THE MADNESS OF HUGH BOY.

THE young minister put out his hand to Vara and the two walked quietly back to where Boy Hugh was kneeling on the grass, and baby Gavin was sitting grasping a dandelion with one hand and looking with wide deep-set eyes of philosophic calm upon the world.

‘Tell me all about it,’ said her champion. And Vara told the tale, with her heart again beginning to beat with terror. ‘But how is it that you are here?’ said he. And Vara explained as much as she could.

‘To look for your father in Liverpool?’ he said. ‘It is a long, sad way—a terrible journey.’ He mused.

He had a passion for setting things right, this young fellow, and it occurred to him that it would be a good thing if he could get these children into a home of some kind, and then communicate with the police on the subject of their father.

But as soon as the young man began to speak in his low, persuasive tones of a home where they could be safe and quiet, Vara stood up.

'O no, sir, I thank you, but we cannot bide. Somebody might come and find us.'

At the mere thought she began to tremble and hastily to put her scattered belongings together. The young minister made no further objection. He walked with them a little along the way, and before he parted from them he put another shilling into Vara's hand. Then he leaped over the stone dyke on his way to a farmhouse where there was a sick man waiting for him. From the other side of the fence he told Vara shyly to remember that she had another Father to care for her, who could always be found. But he was shy about saying so much, this remarkable young man. However, he had a high sense of duty, and he felt that the circumstances justified the observation.

'Thank ye,' said Vara; 'I'll no forget.'

This, their second day, had become one of brooding heat, and Vara was glad to have enough to buy a good meal for them all at the next little town they passed through. They were fortunate also in the afternoon, for at a little house by the wayside, a cottage with red creepers growing all along the wall, the mistress took them all in and gave them a cup of tea and some of the fresh white scones she was baking. There was milk too for little Gavin. And as they went away a thought seemed to strike the woman. She bade them wait a little while. She climbed up into the attic, and presently returned with a shawl, which she wrapped about Vara, and settled the baby into the nook of it with her own hands.

'But this is a good shawl. We must not take it from you,' said Vara.

'Nonsense,' said the good woman; 'it is a fair exchange. Leave me the auld ane; it will make very decent floor-clouts.'

So it was on the whole a good day for them. And it was not till late in the evening that misfortune again befell them. Vara's hands were usually so full of Gavin that she had little thought for anything else. But at one resting place she put her hand into her pocket and her heart stood still because she failed to find the slim coins upon which she had put her trust. She felt the pennies, but not the shilling or the sixpence. She laid Gavin down on the grass and turned the pocket inside out. There was nothing whatever there. But Vara found instead a little slit in the lining, and the thought of her great loss, together with what it meant to them all, turned her faint and sick.

'The man might just as well have had them after all,' she said.

Night fell with them still upon the road. They had found no friendly shelter, and they seemed to be alone on the wide moor, through which the road ran unfenced, like a tangle of string which has been loosely thrown down. Hugh Boy cried bitterly to be allowed to lie down. Vara looked about her anxiously and long. But she could see nothing but the wild moorish hilltops girdling the horizon, too like one another to give her any idea of the direction in which a habited house might lie. She only saw the slow twilight of midsummer in the north creeping down over the brown moors, and in the moist hollows of the bogs shallow pools of mist gathering.

For the distance, the sound of a voice was borne in the still air.

'Hurley, hurley, hie away hame!' it said. And Vara went to the top of a heathery knowe and called loudly. But only the moorbirds, making ready for bed, answered her. They flew round, circling and complaining, especially the peewits, which, being reassured by the small size of the three, came almost offensively near.

Boy Hugh filled his pockets with stones to drive them away. He also got out his whip. He had heard of the Babes in the Wood, and, being a sensible boy, he did not want any Robin Redbreast nonsense. It was not that he so much objected to die, but he felt the humiliation of being covered with leaves by the whaups. He complained bitterly to Vara, who was preoccupied with Gavin, that the Drabble had stolen from him the iron barrel of the pistol which Cleg Kelly had given him. Had it not been for that felony, they would not now have found themselves defenceless in that wild place.

'Boy Hugh thinks there's sure to be lions an' teegers here!' he said.

It was not long before Vara decided that they must spend another night out of doors, and looked about for a suitable spot where they could get water and shelter.

At last she settled upon the lee of a large boulder, and began to give Gavin what remained of his milk. Boy Hugh thought this was his opportunity to make sure that they were well defended against their enemies. The moon was rising, and he remembered that Cleg Kelly had told him how lions and tigers always hunted by moonlight. That widely-read journal, 'The Bully Boys of New York,' was Cleg's authority for this statement.

There was certainly an appalling silence on the face of the moorland. Boy Hugh could see, indeed, the rock behind which Vara and Gavin were. But he tried to forget it. He wanted the sensation of perfect loneliness. Then the devil entered into Boy Hugh, and he wanted to explore. The moon came out from behind a cloud, and everything became bleached and flat, melting away into vague immensities and nerve-shaking mysteries which vanished as you approached. Of course that was not the way Boy Hugh put it to himself. It only made him want to run away. But suddenly a vague fear struck him to the heart, and he started to run back (as he thought) towards Vara and Gavin. He imagined that he could hear the sound of some animal trampling about the moss in search of wandering little boys. And it occurred to him that he had no means of defence except the whip, and even that served him not so well now, for the lash was broken. So this was the reason why Boy Hugh ran away.

Though, indeed, his progress could hardly be called running. For at every few steps he tripped in some intricate twist of heather, tough as wire, and, falling forward, he instinctively bent his body into a half-hoop, like a young hedgehog. Thus he rolled down the brae, often coming upon his feet at the bottom and continuing his flight with energy unabated and without pausing a single moment even to ascertain damages.

And so soon as she missed him Vara stood up, with Gavin in her arms, and cried, 'Come back, Boy Hugh!' But Boy Hugh continued his wild flight, driven by the unreasoning terror of the vast and uncomprehended which had seized him suddenly and without warning.

At last Boy Hugh paused, not so much because he wished it as because he had fallen into a moss-hole up to the neck, and so could run no further. He sustained himself by grasping a bush of blaeberry plants, and he dug his toes into the soft black peat.

Then Boy Hugh, who had not gone to Hunker Court for nothing, bethought him that, since there was nothing else that he could do, it was time to say his prayers. 'O Lord!' he prayed—'O Lord, forgive us our sins, and remember not our trans-some-things against us! Look down from heaven and help'—(so far his supplications had run in the accustomed groove in which Samson Lanpenny conducted the 'opening exercises' of Hunker Court, but at this point Boy Hugh diverged into originality, as Samson did sometimes when he stuck in the middle of the Lord's prayer)

—‘Look down from heaven and help—a—wee laddie in a moss hole. Keep him frae teegers and lions, and bogles and black horses that come oot o’ lochs and eat ye up, and frae the green monkeys that hing on to trees and claw ye as ye gang by. And gie me something to eat, and Vara and Gavin after me. For I’m near dead o’ hunger, and I want nae mair yesterday’s bread, and help me to find my whup-lash. And make me grow up into a man fast, for I want to do as I like—and then, my certes, but I’ll warm the Drabble for stealin’ my pistol. And bless Vara and Gavin, my faither and Cleg Kelly, and a’ inquirin’ freends. Amen.’

And if anybody knows a more comprehensive prayer, let him instantly declare it, or, as the charge runs, be for ever silent.

ADVENTURE XXXVII.

BOY HUGH FINDS OUT THE NATURE OF A KISS.

VARA always looks back upon that night of fear and loneliness as the worst in all their wanderings. She wrapped Gavin tightly in the shawl, till only a little space was left for him to breathe. Then she ran from knowe-top to knowe-top to look for Boy Hugh, and to call him to come back to her. She dared not go far from the boulder lest she should miss her way, and so not be able to find her way to the baby.

While Vara was wandering distracted over the moor, calling pitifully to him, Boy Hugh was comfortably asleep beneath a heather bush. And the June nights are brief and merciful in Scotland. It was not long before a broad bar of light lay across the eastern hills. The pale sea-green lingering in the west where the sun had gone down had not altogether faded into the ashy grey of uncoloured night ere the eastern sky began to flame.

The clouds of sunrise are like ocean-rollers on a wide beach—long, barred, and parallel—for the sun rises through them with majestic circumspection. But the clouds of sunset are apt to converge to a point, like the wake which the sun draws after him in his tumultuous downward plunge.

But the sun rose quite sharply this morning, as though he must be businesslike and alert, in spite of the fact that he had a whole long day before him. As he did so the shadows of every bush of bog-myrtle and each tuft of heather started westwards

with a rush. And the cool blue image of a lonely boulder, like a Breton menhir, lay for half a mile across the moor. On the sunny side of this landmark the red rays fell on a bare and curly head. There was dew upon the draggled hair, just as there was upon the yellow bent grass upon which it pillow'd itself.

Boy Hugh lay curled up, like a collie drowsing in the sun. He continued to sleep quietly and naturally the undisturbed sleep of childhood. Nor did he waken till the dew had dried from the bent and from off the tangles of his hair.

At last he awoke, when the sun was already high. He uncoiled him like a lithe young animal, and started to find himself under the open heaven instead of under a roof. With a shake and a toss of his head he made his toilet. Then suddenly he remembered about Vara, and hoped vaguely that he would soon find her. But, alas! the day was bright. The sunshine began to run in his veins, and all the moorland world was before him. He did not think much more about her at all. For the moment he was as merry as the larks singing above him. He hallooed to the plovers, and occasionally he threw stones at them, just as the mood took him. By-and-by Boy Hugh came to a wide burn, and at once proceeded to cross it, as many a time he had crossed a plank in Callendar's yard, upon all-fours like a monkey.

The burn was fringed, like many of the watercourses of the southern uplands, with a growth of sparse and ill-favoured birches. Hugh Boy found one of these which leaned far over the water, having had its roots undermined by the winter spates. He crawled out upon its swaying top without hesitation till it became too slender to bear him. He counted upon the slender trunk bending like a fishing-rod and depositing him near enough to the opposite bank to drop safely to the ground. But just when Hugh Boy was ready to leap, the treacherous birch gave way entirely, and fell souse into the water, with the small human squirrel still clinging to it. The birch lay across the pool, and Boy Hugh held fast. He was up to the neck in water. He wondered how he would get out. First he managed to kick his legs free of the twigs which clutched him and tried to drag him down.

'Here, nice little boy!' suddenly a voice above him cried. 'Take hold of my hand, and I will pull you out of the water.'

It was the clearest little voice in the world, and it spoke with a trill which Boy Hugh seemed to have heard somewhere before. It conveyed somehow, indeed, a reminiscence of Miss Celie Tennant.

But the little lady who spoke was only a year or two older than Boy Hugh himself, and she was dressed in the daintiest creamy stuff, fine like cobweb. Boy Hugh looked at her in such amazement that he came near to letting go the birch-tree altogether. She seemed to him to be all wonderful, with yellow hair like summer clouds, and blue eyes full of pity.

Boy Hugh recalled certain things which he had heard at Hunker Court.

‘Are you an angel?’ he said, quite seriously.

‘Oh no, silly!’ cried the maiden gaily, shaking her fleece bewilderingly at him. ‘Of course, I am only a little girl. I just tooked my parolsol and comed a walk. And you are the very nicest little boy that ever I saw—quite a child, of course,’ she added patronisingly. ‘But take hold of my parolsol. Be careful not to splash me when you shake yourself. And after that I’ll give you a kiss. I like nice little boys!’

‘What is a kiss?’ asked Boy Hugh.

They did not deal in the commodity in the Tinklers’ Lands. And even if his sister Vara did kiss him to sleep every night, and was for ever kissing the baby as if its mouth was a sweetmeat, she did not think it becoming or menseful to mention the word. So that, quite sincerely, Boy Hugh asked again, ‘What is a kiss, little girl?’

‘Come up here, nice boy, and I will show you!’ replied the maiden promptly.

And somehow Hugh knew that this was an invitation by no means to be declined.

To be continued.)

A CONVENT PRISON.

In Austria a woman, no matter what she may do, is never regarded or treated quite as a criminal. She may rob, burn, kill—set every law at defiance, in fact, and break all the commandments in turn—without a fear of ever being called upon to face a gallows. She is not even sent to an ordinary prison to do penance for her sins; the hardest fate that can befall her, indeed, is to be compelled to take up her abode for a time in a convent. There the treatment meted out to her is not so much justice seasoned with mercy, as mercy seasoned, and none too well, with justice. Even in official reports she is an ‘erring sister’—one who has, it is true, strayed from the narrow path, but quite involuntarily.

The convent to which Vienna sends its erring sisters is at Neudorf, only a few miles away from the city. There any woman who is convicted of either crime or misdemeanour is at once transported. The judge before whom she is tried decides, of course, how long she shall remain. He may, too, if he deems it right, give orders that while there she shall pass a day in solitary confinement from time to time, and, on these occasions, be less plentifully supplied with food than usual. In the great majority of cases, however, no instructions of this kind are given; the women are simply handed over to the keeping of the Superior of the convent, to be dealt with as she thinks best. She houses them, feeds them, clothes them, and provides them with instruction and occupation; and the Government gives her for what she does thirty-five kreuzers a day (about sevenpence) for each prisoner under her care. So long as these women are in the convent the full responsibility for their safe keeping and general well-being rests on the Superior; and, in return, she is allowed practically a free hand in her management of them. There are, it is true, certain regulations in force with regard to the amount of work they may be required to do, and the punishments that may be inflicted on them; but these are not of a nature to interfere seriously with her freedom of action. She is, in fact, virtually an autocrat within her own domain; and there are not half a dozen women in Europe to-day who have so much power for the weal or woe of their fellows as she has. The only man attached to the place—a Government

inspector—is little more than her *aide-de-camp*; and as for the great officials who pay her flying visits from time to time, they are more inclined to seek advice than to give it.

The convent itself is a fine old building which once upon a time was a castle, and seems to have been strongly fortified. The religious community to which it now belongs received it as a present from its owner, who cared more for the Church than for his heir. There is nothing in the appearance of the place to show that it is a prison; the courtyard stands open the whole day long, and there is never a guard within sight. The doorkeeper is a pretty little nun whom a strong woman could easily seize up in her arms and run away with. She welcomes all comers with the brightest of smiles, and leads them into the parlour without making a single inquiry. If you ask to see the Mother Superior, however, she shakes her head decidedly; for the Superior is a personage of too much importance to waste her time on chance visitors. It was with the utmost difficulty, the other day, that the Sister could be persuaded even to take her a message. And when she returned with the news that the Superior would receive us, her manner implied clearly that there was reason for much gratitude on our part.

The Superior is a handsome old lady with keen, penetrating eyes, a firm mouth, and an expression that is at once kindly and—oddly enough, considering she is a nun—humorous. She has a gentle courtesy of manner that is singularly attractive; she has, too, that most excellent thing in woman, a low sweet voice. Judging by the stately grace with which she wears her long cream-white robes, her early days were more probably passed at the Hofburg than in a convent. The fact of her being a great lady, however, does not prevent her being a clear-headed business woman. She has at her finger-ends all the details of the working of the institution under her control; and not a spoon is moved there without her knowing the whys and wherefores of its moving. She is evidently heart and soul in her work, and keenly interested in everything that concerns her charges. She knows all the circumstances of their cases, and deals with each of them individually, bringing good influences to bear on them, appealing to their feelings, and trying to arouse in them a sense of self-respect. It is on their account, not her own, that she objects to visitors; for to turn them into a raree show, she maintains, is not only painful for them, but demoralising in the highest degree.

Although we went provided with all sorts of introductions, official and otherwise, it was only after much heart-searching that she allowed us to pass through the great iron door which separates the part of the convent where the prisoners live from the rest of the building.

Even here there is nothing gloomy or prison-like about the place ; and, beyond the fact of the door being kept locked, nothing to indicate that they who live there are subject to any special restraint. The beautiful old stone staircase was flooded with sunshine that morning ; and there was a smile on the faces of half the women we passed there. The Superior led the way into a large cheerful-looking room, in which some fifty women were sitting working. Perhaps half a dozen of them were making matchboxes or buttons ; and the others were doing fine needlework, beautiful embroidery, lace and wool work, under the guidance of a Sister who looked for all the world as if she had stepped straight out of one of Fra Angelico's pictures. She passes her life going about among these women distributing to each in turn directions, encouragement, or reproof, as the case may be, always with a smile on her lips—one, though, in which there is more patient endurance than gladness. Another Sister, a woman with a strong, sphinx-like face, was sitting at the further end of the room, on a raised platform. She is there to maintain discipline and guard against those outbursts of temper which, from time to time, disturb the harmony of life in this convent. As we entered the room all the women rose and greeted us, in the most cheery fashion, with what sounded like a couplet from an old chant. They speedily took up their work again, however, at a sign from the Superior.

It would be hard to find a more prosperous-looking set of women than these convent prisoners: to see them one would never dream that they were supposed to be undergoing punishment. They are perfect models of cleanliness and order, their hair is carefully dressed, their cotton gowns are quite spotless, and so are the bright-coloured fichus they all wear. Physically, they seem to be just about up to the average; but intellectually, so far as an outsider can judge, they are considerably either above or below the great mass of their fellows. Some of the faces are almost idiotic in their stupidity ; others are quite startlingly clever—keen, sharp, and sagacious. Although a few of the prisoners looked depressed or sullen, the great majority seemed not only contented

but happy, happier by far than half the working women one comes across in the outside world. There was a touch of something quite pathetic in the expression of more than one who were there: it was as if they had at length found rest and peace after much sore tossing, and were grateful. With some few exceptions, the women were evidently delighted to see us; and little wonder either, for it is not every day that they have the chance of talking to a stranger, or to each other either, for that matter, excepting during the recreation hours. There was quite a ring of pleasure in their voices as they answered our questions, mere inquiries for the most part with regard to what they were doing. They all seemed to take great pride in their work: one woman stroked an exquisite piece of lace she was making as if she positively loved it.

These women were all so kindly in their ways, so peaceful and good-humoured, they differed so completely from our pre-conceived ideas of criminals, that we were puzzled to imagine what could have brought them into prison. We had never a doubt but that their offences were of the most trivial nature, and we said so. The Superior gave us one of her odd, humorous smiles.

‘Did you notice that woman in the corridor?’ she asked.
‘She is Marie Schneider.’

That insignificant-looking little woman, who had stood aside with a gentle deprecatory smile to allow us to pass, Marie Schneider! Why, in any other place one would have set her down at once as the hard-working wife of a struggling curate, so thoroughly respectable did she look. And she is Marie Schneider, a European celebrity with more murders on her conscience than she has fingers on her hands!

‘And you let her stay here?’

‘We have nowhere else to put her,’ the Inspector, who had joined us, replied; ‘and we don’t hang women in Austria.’

Nor is she, as we soon found, the only notoriety in the place. One of the prisoners is a delicate-looking girl with large brown eyes and golden hair—a type of beauty almost peculiar to Austrians. She has a low, cooing voice, and a singularly sweet, innocent expression.

‘What on earth can that girl have done to be sent here?’ I whispered.

‘Done,’ the Inspector replied grimly; ‘set a house on fire in the hope of killing a man with his wife and five children.’

The girl must have had extraordinarily sharp ears; for,

although we were standing at some distance away, she heard what he said, and she gave him a glance such as I hope never to see again in my life. It was absolutely diabolic: had there been a knife within reach the man would have died on the spot. Yet only a moment before she had been looking up into my face with a smile an angel might have envied.

Several of the prisoners are in the convent for killing their own children; some for killing, or trying to kill, their husbands; others for stealing or embezzling; others, again, for no more serious crime than begging. There are all degrees of guilt there, in fact, and all ages, from girls of sixteen to women of nearly eighty. And they all live together on terms of perfect equality; for there are no distinctions of rank there—no one is better or worse than her neighbour. When the convent door closes behind them they have done, for the time being, not only with the outside world, but with their own past. They start life afresh, as it were.

We went from room to room, into the great dormitories with their long rows of snowy white beds; into the kitchen, with its gleaming saucepans and quaint old crockery. Here we both saw and tasted the dinner which was being served for the prisoners. And a very good dinner it was—so good, indeed, as to shock our sense of justice. These criminals had three courses for their meal: soup, beef with cabbage, and pudding, all well cooked and nicely seasoned; and there were, as we well knew, hundreds of hard-working men and women in Vienna that day who must dine on bread and cabbage, and none too much of that. The prisoners are allowed, too, to add to the meals provided for them by buying for themselves little luxuries—cups of coffee, diminutive glasses of wine, &c. They must, of course, earn the money to pay for these things before they can have them; but that is easily done, providing they be deaf and diligent. They are obliged to do a certain amount of work every day, and the money for which this is sold is the property of the Superior, or rather of the community to which she belongs. For anything, however, that they choose to do over and above their allotted task they receive payment according to a fixed scale. Half the money they earn is given to them at the end of each week; and the other half accumulates until they have completed their sentence. As some of the women can make as much as five or six gulden a week, they have often quite a tidy little sum in hand wherewith to start on a new career when the time comes for them to leave the convent.

The Superior mentioned a curious fact in connection with the prison commissariat. In her time she has had persons of all ranks under her care: she has had countesses, baronesses, the wives of rich bourgeois, delicate ladies who have passed their lives in the midst of the greatest luxury; she has had, too, the very poorest of the poor, tramps and vagabonds, those who from their earliest days have had to carry on a hand-to-hand fight against starvation. From the former class she has never had a single complaint with regard to the food she provides; they have eaten whatever was set before them, and seemed thankful. From the latter class, however, she has had grumbling without end; yet all fare alike in the convent. It is always they who have been accustomed to the scantiest and coarsest rations, she maintains, who cavil most when in prison at the quality of their food.

The wing of the building that is set aside as a hospital is quite charming. It is in the sunniest part of the house, and every room is a perfect picture of cheerfulness and comfort. There are brightly coloured pictures on the walls, and vases of beautiful flowers on the tables. Everything that smacks of gloom has been carefully banished; and even the Sisters who act as nurses seem to have been specially chosen for their task on account of their gift of looking only on the bright side of life. The way they beam down on their patients is enough in itself to cure the sorriest of dyspeptics. They have all sorts of cunning devices for raising pillows and straightening beds without disturbing those who lie on them; devices, too, and very ingenious ones, for driving away pain and soothing to sleep restless sufferers. If the patients under their care were archduchesses, instead of criminals, they could not be more skilfully handled or carefully waited upon. And the prisoners are evidently conscious of their good luck: their faces quite lighted up with affection and gratitude that day, when they caught sight of the Superior. One woman, however, answered a chance remark with a passionate burst of tears. She was going to die, she said, between her sobs; she knew she was, and she wished to live. The Superior and the Sisters lavished tenderness on her, and strove to comfort her, but it was all in vain. When we were right down the corridor we could still hear her piteous cry, 'Ich will nicht sterben.' Yet one might have thought that she would have been rather glad than otherwise that the end should be so near; for her only chance of passing out of that prison door was in a coffin.

From the hospital we went to the chapel, and a very beautiful chapel it is, graceful in form and gorgeous in colouring. There are fine pictures on the walls, and exquisite flowers on the altar ; the Empress Elizabeth herself, indeed, has not a more perfect shrine at which to worship than these guilt-laden prisoners. There is a beautiful organ, too, and everything that can be done is done to render the services attractive and impressive. The result is that the women, many of whom are abnormally emotional, delight in going to church. The beauty of the surroundings there seems to touch certain subtle chords in their nature, arousing memories in some, in others exciting hopes. They throw themselves heart and soul into the singing, and listen to the exhortations with rapt attention. Many of them—and they the wildest and most desperate as a rule—fall under the influence of religious enthusiasm, a fact which contributes not a little to the maintenance of discipline in the prison.

In the chapel, strange to say, is to be found the one outward and visible sign there is in the convent that they who go there belong to the dangerous class. The chancel is separated from the nave—the only part of the building to which the prisoners are admitted—by a strong iron grating. The Superior seemed to think that this was a very necessary precaution, as otherwise a woman, in one of those paroxysms of rage to which some of them are subject, might attack the officiating clergy. She looked infinitely amused, however, when, remembering the golden-haired girl, I suggested that she and the Sisters stood more in need of protection than the priests. There are only thirty-three of them in the convent—the Inspector lives outside—and there are always more than a hundred prisoners, who all go about the house without let or hindrance. Those Sisters in the workroom are shut up with their charges, quite beyond the reach of aid, for the hour together. What could they do, two against fifty, if they were attacked ? The Superior admitted that, if the prisoners revolted *en masse*, it would go ill with her and her companions ; but such a thing never had occurred, and she is perfectly convinced that it never will. It is only the new arrivals who give trouble, she says, and they soon fall under the influences that are brought to bear on them.

The way the Sisters manage their charges is quite wonderful, the Inspector told me later. 'Yes, they look quiet and good-humoured enough now,' he said, 'but you should see them when

they arrive. Some of them are more like wild animals than human beings. I would rather have ten men to deal with any day than one woman, and I have had a wide experience. Women, when they go wrong, are so violent and unreasonable—so tricky, too; one never knows what they will be up to next.'

Among these nuns the management of prisoners is become quite a science. They always keep a woman under strict surveillance during the first few days of her stay in the convent, and make a special study of her character, with a view to finding out how she can be most easily influenced. Some of the prisoners are treated with a certain amount of severity—are confined in cells and fed on bread and water when they set rules at defiance; but even in their case the discipline enforced is not harsher than that to which many a delicate lady, in a Carmelite convent, submits voluntarily. With others the Sisters reason; with others, again, and they the great majority, they try persuasion. They lavish sympathy, however, on them all—on the worst as on the best, and herein lies, perhaps, the secret of their success. These women, even the most violent of them, are often at heart sorely battered and cast down when they are handed over to the nuns; and a kindly greeting, a few friendly words, at such a moment have a wonderfully humanising effect.

A few years ago one of the prisoners held the Sisters completely at bay for some days. She was obdurate alike to threats and persuasions, punishments and rewards. She would neither work nor eat, but passed her time just tearing her hair and hurling curses around. So violent was she that no one could approach her without danger. At length, when the Sisters were quite at their wits' end, one of them asked her if she had no relative or friend of whom she cared to have news. The woman gasped for breath for a moment, with a look of wild astonishment in her eyes, as if she could hardly believe her ears. She sprang to her feet, however, in a perfect ecstasy of delight and gratitude, when the Sister followed up her inquiry by volunteering to write for her and obtain any information she wished. From that moment there was not a more tractable or better behaved woman in the convent. She had, it seems, left five little children behind her when sent to prison; and was just eating out her heart with the fear (a groundless one, as it proved) lest they were starving.

There is much in this convent prison, it must be confessed, that jars upon our English sense of what is right and seemly: we

had a sort of feeling while there that many of these women were not being severely enough dealt with ; that they were not rendering tooth for tooth, eye for eye, in the proper orthodox fashion. Much righteous indignation was engendered by the spectacle of criminals—murderesses, even, and incendiaries—being so well fed and treated so kindly. Then the general clubbing together of all ages and all degrees of guilt, that is the order of the day there, is contrary to all our ideas of justice. The place is organised on a radically wrong system, in fact ; and should any of our prison reformers ever pay it a visit, they will without doubt thenceforth hold it up as a perfect model of what such an institution should not be. Still—these things are beyond all comprehension—it cannot be denied that they who are sent to Neudorf are, as a rule, better women—more moral, more human, and more industrious—when they leave than when they enter. Of our own prisons it has been said, with scant justice, perhaps, that if by chance an honest man goes in, he is a rogue when he comes out.

AN AFFECTIONATE SON.

THE name on the card was Maddox, but at the first sound of his voice I recognised the man shown into the office as Sydney Carstairs. He didn't notice me ; he was too eager to get audience of Mr. Maciver, who managed the firm's advertising. We do a good deal in that way, and I've no doubt that Maddox's card had been sent up a good many times before our Mr. Maciver would grant an interview. So I leaned back and listened while my old school-fellow let loose the flood of his eloquence.

'The "Lamp of Truth,"' he said, 'is a publication which is of almost unique value to such a firm as yours. We have only just begun, but we have a great future before us. We spare no expense to make our paper attractive to readers in all parts of the country. We have a weekly sermon by the Rev. T. Baggs Calshott, the famous preacher of the Balls Pond Tabernacle ; Lucy Markham, the well-known novelist, writes a serial story for us, and we have each week a poetical contribution from Catherine Herbert, the talented authoress of the "Rainbow of Hope." With these attractions we shall go in hundreds of thousands of Christian households throughout the land, and shall form a simply unrivalled medium for such high-class advertisers as yourselves.'

Our Mr. Maciver turned an amused face towards me. I knew very well that Mr. Maddox had been admitted in order that I might have an object-lesson. I was new to the business, and had to be taught all branches of it. So he stopped the full tide of Mr. Maddox's eloquence by the remorseless question :

'What present circulation do you guarantee ?'

While poor Sydney was delivering himself of an entirely evasive reply I had time to observe him closely. He was the last man I should ever have expected to see figuring as an advertising canvasser, and I knew already enough of these people to see that my old friend belonged distinctly to the lower varieties of that interesting genus. His hat alone was enough to show the hardest pinch of poverty. He had been such a dandy at Oxford !

Mr. Maciver had tossed 'The Lamp of Truth' contemptuously aside, but Carstairs tried a second chance.

'"The Footlights,"' he said, speaking as fast as he could, for fear he might not be allowed to finish, 'has a splendid circulation,

not only with the profession, but also among the large and increasing class who are deeply interested in the drama. Actors are especially fond of savoury additions to their dishes. There are some, I believe, who almost live upon pickles, and as a medium for your unrivalled products—'

But our Mr. Maciver had amused himself enough, and signified pretty plainly that there was no business to be done and that Sydney might retire. The poor man's briskness vanished. He seemed, as it were, to resume a look of settled disappointment as he slowly turned to the door.

'Dormy,' I called out, 'dear me, Dormy—"Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus."

Sydney Carstairs had once made this particular false quantity, and so earned himself more than one nickname.

He looked round at the sound of the old appellation, and saw me. He turned very red and let fall the papers he was carrying.

'Mr. Maciver,' I said, 'this is an old friend of mine; we must do something for him. Something good. A whole page and a series, you know.'

Mr. Maciver looked rather disgusted at this unbusinesslike procedure, but commenced an examination of the two journals.

Sydney, meanwhile, seemed very awkward and ill at ease, and assured me several times that he had not expected to see me; that he did not know that I took an active interest in the business, and so on.

He approved faintly of the choice Mr. Maciver had made, which preferred the 'Footlights' to 'The Lamp of Truth.'

'Neither is a really good medium,' Sydney said, with sudden frankness, 'but you are doing it to oblige me, and "The Lamp of Truth" expects the heaviest lying;' and he departed, looking several degrees less unhappy, but not before I had arranged to meet him again.

A day or two later Sydney dined with me, and we talked for a long time over old days and old friends. It was at my place in the country, and we sat out of doors after dinner and smoked. As the twilight deepened Sydney became more confidential and a little more cheerful.

'I daresay,' he said, 'you were surprised enough to see me trotting round to tout for advertisements. It is not a grand position for a banker's son. But I daresay you know the bank failed and my father died suddenly, and there was nothing left for me.

I had been called to the Bar, but had never seen a brief, and did not even expect to see one. I tried journalism—tried very hard, very hard indeed—but I suppose I wasn't clever enough ; at any rate, I could not make it pay, and so I drifted into what I'm doing now. Sometimes I don't do so badly.' Sydney was silent, and I quite understood that those times did not come very often.

'I'm awfully obliged to you,' he burst out again, 'for helping me. An order from a firm like yours is worth something. I've shown it all round, and I've got Condensed Cocoa on the strength of it, and I've half a promise from Black's, the soap people. Why, when I went back to "Footlights'" office with your order in my hand, they nearly fell on my neck for joy.'

To change the subject I turned back to the old days, and reminded Carstairs of a school holiday I had spent at his father's house.

'I had a very jolly time of it,' I said. 'I used to ride races across your father's park with your sister Mabel, and once her horse ran away, and your mother was terribly frightened.'

Carstairs sighed. 'Poor Mab is dead, and the park was sold for building sites.' Then he added as an after-thought, 'But wouldn't you like to go down and see my mother some time? She is living at Kew. When the crash came and all our furniture was sold, we saved enough to furnish a tiny cottage. There was a little money settled on her, and she manages on that. There's a young lady who lives with her. The dining-room will just seat four, and my mother has often asked me to bring a friend, and, as a rule, I haven't anyone. The friends I have now are not exactly *salonfähig*, as they say in Germany. My mother would be sure to recognise you.'

Sydney's prediction was completely fulfilled when I went down with him a week later to the tiny cottage he had spoken of. Mrs. Carstairs recognised me at once, and reminded me of several things which had happened during my stay at her house. But I certainly should not have known her again, though I had a clear mental image of the lady I had known before. But time had not dealt gently with Mrs. Carstairs ; the comely, cheerful matron of my remembrance had become an old lady with furrowed cheeks, bent shoulders, and white hair. The only other guest was a young lady whom Mrs. Carstairs called Lucy, and Sydney, Miss Hilton. She was quite a pretty young lady, not in her first youth, and I divined at once that Mrs. Carstairs had formed plans in which her son and

Miss Hilton were greatly interested. Sydney looked very different from the shabby being who had been so exceedingly deferential to our clerk. His dress-clothes were faultless, and he had an orchid in his buttonhole. He expressed himself with considerable decision on many points, and I noticed that the younger as well as the elder lady listened to what he said with a great deal of attention. Mrs. Carstairs contrived that a good deal of her son's conversation was directed to Miss Hilton, and after dinner she manoeuvred them both into the little patch of garden, while she sat in the verandah and talked to me. I suppose Carstairs had foreseen this, and had guessed what would be the subject of his mother's conversation, for on the way down he had given me a caution.

'My mother,' he had said, with some confusion, 'isn't aware at all of what I am doing for a living. I've told her that I am connected with the Press, and she hasn't any idea of the precise nature of the connection. Please don't enlighten her.'

So I was not altogether surprised when Mrs. Carstairs asked me if I had ever had any connection with journalism. The negative reply that was expected served as a starting-point for the proud mother.

'Sydney writes a great deal, I believe,' she said; 'in fact, it's his only real occupation. His practice at the Bar amounts to nothing. He has never told you, I suppose, the papers that he's connected with?'

'I have never heard him allude to himself as contributor to any particular organ,' I replied; 'but then, you know, I have hardly seen him for a great many years.'

'It would be all the same, I expect, if you had seen him every day,' the old lady returned very quickly. 'Sydney is very reticent about Press matters, though he's frankness itself in other things. And I suppose he is quite right to be discreet. He always says that the anonymity of writers for the daily or weekly Press ought to be most carefully maintained. We can never get him to admit the authorship of a single article. For a long time we didn't even know what paper he was permanently connected with.'

'But you know now?' I queried.

'Yes; we found it out by accident—Miss Hilton and myself. We had been talking politics one evening, and the next day we found everything we had said in a leader—much better expressed, of course—and when we taxed him with having written the article, he couldn't deny it. And do you know what paper it was?'

I shook my head.

‘The “Times,”’ said the old lady impressively. ‘And now we’ve got so far that we can tell which articles are his. Sometimes there isn’t anything by him, and then, you know, I think the paper is very dull,’ she added, with a little laugh.

‘How do you tell your son’s writing?’ I asked.

‘Oh,’ she replied, ‘there are a lot of little signs that we know. There are certain words he is very fond of using, and, and—I can’t explain it, but there are lots of little things. Lucy and I always read the paper, and we each of us settle in our mind which is his, and in almost every case when we come to compare notes we find we agree perfectly. So you see,’ she concluded, with a lively nod. She was silent for a few moments, watching the two who were pacing about in the little garden, but she soon returned to the subject.

‘It’s a great responsibility,’ she said, ‘to write for a journal like the “Times,” and I am sure my son feels it. Sometimes he seems quite absent-minded, and—and almost as if he had too much to think of. And sometimes he doesn’t come down to see us for weeks and weeks. He is too busy, he says.’

Mrs. Carstairs then began to question me about myself, but the fact that I had been married only a few months before rolled the conversation back to the favourite topic.

‘I wish Sydney would marry,’ she said; ‘but he always tells me that he hasn’t time, and he doesn’t like being pressed on the subject.’

The return of the pair from outside made the conversation general, and before very long Carstairs declared that he was obliged to leave. We drove back together in a hansom. Carstairs was silent and depressed. He seemed to be relapsing into the weary mood of the underpaid drudge.

‘Did my mother say much about me?’ he queried timidly.

I told him the substance of the conversation. ‘She thinks that you write for the “Times,”’ I said.

He shook his head sadly. ‘And I let her think so—in fact, I’ve encouraged the idea. Poor soul! if she saw me going about my work day after day, waiting for hours in offices, hanging round doors, in the hope of getting a word in with the big man as he comes out, and not only with firms like yours, but with small people—dirty, greasy, illiterate tradespeople, who, all the same, look down on me and snub me at times, and are offensively familiar

at others—if she saw this going on when she thinks I am meditating on deep affairs of state, I am afraid it would almost break her heart. I lead a dog's life, and my worst fear is that my mother may come to know of it. You may think it is very wrong of me to let her deceive herself so, but I can't help it.'

'Wouldn't it be better to let her know how things are?' I asked.

'I can't tell her the truth; I can't tell her that I'm deep down in the mud and that I shall always stick there. It's not my fault,' he went on, in passionate tones, 'that I am where I am! I tried my best. I worked early and late, and covered reams of paper, but 'twas all of no use. I was determined to do something for my poor mother—to give her some of the luxuries which she was always used to. I meant to do a great deal, and I've done just nothing—absolutely nothing. I am too miserably poor to help her in any way. The only pleasure I can give her is to let her think that I am prosperous and happy. And even that is hard. I can't manage at times to keep a decent coat to wear when I go down to see her.'

He buried his face in his hands and groaned audibly. I tried to cheer him up by the hope of brighter days, but he refused to be comforted. With an attempt at jocularity, I said :

'You'll be lucky in time, perhaps. A rich wife is being saved up for you somewhere.'

He looked up suddenly. 'Did my mother say anything about that?'

'She'd like you to be married,' I said.

He sighed profoundly. 'She wants me to marry Miss Hilton,' he replied, 'who will have some money by-and-by—not that she imagines I need it.'

'Well,' I said, 'why don't you? She struck me as a very charming young lady, and evidently fond of you.'

He was silent a few moments, and then said, in a low voice :

'The fact is I am married already, and I have two small children to provide for. That's another secret I have to keep. My wife is not a lady—she doesn't even pretend to be.'

My curiosity was excited, and I couldn't help showing it.

'She was a waitress,' he said, 'at a cheap restaurant in the City. Steak and kidney pudding for 7d.—that sort of thing. She was very pretty and quiet, and I was solitary. I had given up any hopes of succeeding at anything, and I fell in love with

the waitress. I couldn't help it. It is not good for man to be alone, I suppose. At any rate, we are married; there are two children to look after, and there'll be another before long. My mother-in-law lives with us,' he went on with an air of stolid resignation, 'and looks after things. She is a good manageress, but her temper gets the better of her sometimes, and when I am unlucky and can't bring any money in, she—well, she doesn't do much to console me.'

Before we parted I asked him if I could help him financially a little.

'You know,' I said, 'there's a profit on pickles, and we don't sell our jams at cost price. I can always spare a little money. Won't you let me help you now and then?'

He thanked me heartily, but declined the offer.

'I'll bear it in mind as a last resource,' he said; 'but I don't want to begin borrowing little sums. I should never be able to pay them back, and it might become a habit. Leave me what poor shreds of self-respect I have got left.'

I had thought of doing something more than occasionally advancing small sums, but I saw he had misunderstood me, and I did not press my offer further. I determined to bear the matter in mind, and to see if I could find any better opening for my old schoolfellow. But nothing occurred for some time; I had plenty to think of, and the idea of helping Carstairs receded more and more into the background. But I got my wife to call at the cottage at Kew. She liked Mrs. Carstairs very much, and took her and Miss Hilton sometimes for a drive through Richmond Park. They were invited, too, to some of the milder functions at our house. Mrs. Carstairs' conversation was always full of her son's supposed contribution to the 'Times.' She showed us some of these, and claimed our admiration. One afternoon, after five-o'clock tea, she consulted me, in a carefully contrived *tête-à-tête*, as to the probable remuneration.

'Sydney does three or four leaders a week for the "Times." What do you think they would pay him?' She looked at me inquiringly.

I disclaimed all knowledge, but thought 1,000*l.* a year would be something like it.

'That's what I should have said,' the old lady rejoined, evidently pleased at my views concurring with her own. 'And then, of course, Sydney writes for other papers. I've been think-

ing of this, because he has been very economical lately in one or two little things. Cabs, for example. He never comes in a cab, and even when it rains he won't let us send out to fetch one. He says he prefers the railways. And once, when I knew the train he was coming by and met him at the station, I actually saw him get out of a third-class carriage—fancy that for Sydney!—a carriage full of the most dreadful-looking people. Now you know he wouldn't have done that without some reason. Can you guess what that was?' and she looked me right in the face with a smile on her lips.

I could guess easily enough, but it was not my duty to shatter the dear old lady's illusions. So I murmured vaguely something about the democratic tendencies of the age—many people of the best position always travelled third class; one or two peers, I had been told, always did so, &c.

'Or perhaps,' I suggested, as an afterthought, 'he was studying the manners and customs of the working classes, preparatory to writing some article?'

I felt rather ashamed of the plausibility of this suggestion. Mrs. Carstairs shook her head in vigorous dissent.

'No,' she said; 'Sydney doesn't condescend to that style of journalism. Politics—*la haute politique*—and literature form his department. And the democratic tendencies of the age are not the reason either. Sydney isn't democratic any more than I am. Quite the reverse. There's one bit of Latin that I know, because I've heard him quote it so often when he was a young man—*Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*. I know that's in Horace, and I know what it means. No, I'm sure that it is for a special motive that he has become so penurious lately. He wants to save money for some very particular purpose, and I know what that purpose is.'

I was evidently expected to be curious, and I satisfied expectation.

'I can speak to you,' the old lady went on—'speak to you as an old friend. You know, when the creditors came down on us and things were sold, there were dividends paid. I don't know exactly how many, or what they amounted to, but I am afraid they didn't come to twenty shillings in the pound. And that's what Sydney's saving for—to pay everybody everything. I am sure of it. When the crash came I remember his telling me that that was what he was going to do. He's never said anything about it since, and I had quite forgotten all about it, and I was puzzled by

his penuriousness, till all of a sudden I remembered what he had said, and then everything was clear. I knew that he was patiently accumulating till he had got quite enough to pay off everything with interest—I'm sure he'd want to pay interest as well—and then he'd come forward, and call the creditors and pay off everything, and then come to me and say: "Mother, I've cleared our good name from all reproach. Now I am a free man, and I can marry the girl of my choice"—and she looked across to Miss Hilton, who was chatting with my wife at a little distance. 'And I think you will find,' she went on, dropping her voice to a whisper, 'that it won't be very long before all this takes place. I have reasons for thinking so.'

I was weak enough to say something indefinite about this paying off of old debts being very rare. 'And it's very noble conduct,' I said, 'but—'

'You think it a little quixotic,' the old lady replied, quickly; 'perhaps I do, too. But there would be no use trying to persuade Sydney—he couldn't be got to take the business view of the subject.'

Our *tête-à-tête* was interrupted, and the theme of conversation changed. But before we left the old lady pressed me very earnestly to dine at Kew on a certain date she named.

'It's my birthday, you know,' she said, 'and Sydney is sure to be there. We haven't seen him for a long time—we can hardly expect to see much of him now that a general election is going on, but I'm sure he'll be there then. He has never missed my birthday yet.'

'I promised to be of the party, and the evident pleasure which my acceptance gave was painfully significant. I could see that the old lady was quite sure in her own mind that that evening was the time fixed for the scene which was to mark the triumphant issue of her son's strange lapse into penuriousness.

Only the day before the evening of the dinner Carstairs called at our offices, and contrived, not without difficulty, to get admitted to my sanctum. He looked even shabbier than he had done when I saw him first. Things were going very badly with him, he said. 'The Footlights' had been sold to a man who did his own canvassing, and 'The Lamp of Truth' had gone out entirely.

'Condensed Cocoa gave them a short order,' Carstairs said, 'and when that came to an end the paper died. But I haven't come to talk about that,' he added, after a short pause, 'but to ask

you to lend me a few pounds. I know I refused when you offered before, but perhaps you won't mind that.'

'Of course not,' I said. 'Dear me, Dormy, don't make a fuss about a trifle.'

'It's for to-morrow's dinner,' he said. 'I've always kept up my mother's birthday. I always managed it all right, but this year I can't. My dress-suit isn't—isn't available, and I want to take a few flowers and some little trifle.'

He named a small sum, and I handed over the money.

'I don't know when I'll pay you back,' he said; 'perhaps never, for things are getting worse and worse with me.'

I met him the next day at the station at Kew. He was irreproachably attired, and carried a big bouquet of choice flowers. His looks were gloomy.

'I don't know,' he said, 'if this was all to be done over again whether I would do it. But I've kept up appearances so long that I must go on doing so to the end. It would be cruel to undceive my poor mother now.'

He shook off all outward signs of depression before he reached the house, and responded warmly to his mother's effusive welcome. He talked a good deal during dinner, and interested the ladies with gossip of the great world, gained as I guessed by a careful preliminary perusal of the society journals. Mention was made of the approaching marriage of an ex-Cabinet Minister, and the ladies were curious about the bride.

'Is she so very good-looking?' Mrs. Carstairs asked. 'You've seen her scores of times, of course?'

'Not lately,' Sydney said, with a hurried glance at me. Then he added, 'But she was quite the belle of last season.'

Mrs. Carstairs looked gravely at her son. 'You mustn't let yourself drop out of society,' she said, 'not even for a general election.'

After dinner the evening was very warm, and we all sat out in the little garden. After a time music was suggested, and Miss Hilton agreed to play a sonatina.

'It's your favourite, Sydney,' his mother said, 'and you must turn over the leaves, and we'll stay out here and have a little chat.'

As soon as the other two had passed into the drawing-room Mrs. Carstairs opened fire on me with—

'Wasn't it a beautiful bouquet that Sydney brought me? It must have cost a great deal,' and she looked at me significantly.

I knew what was passing in her mind. She meant to say, 'The self-imposed task is over, the period of penury is gone, and the revelation will soon be made.'

I was so sure that this was passing in her mind that I hastened to change the subject. But she soon got back to the favourite topic.

'Don't you think poor Sydney looks a little fatigued?' and without waiting for a reply she went on:—'He has had to work so hard, you know. But what a triumph it is for him to have overthrown the Government! It is really he who has done it, you know. Everybody says it is all due to the "Times." But I hope there won't be another general election just yet.'

I acquiesced vaguely in the wish.

'You know,' she went on, 'when Sydney was a boy, and did so well at school, I used to be very ambitious for him. I used to think he would enter Parliament like his father, and that he might win a great position there—"The applause of listening senates to command," you know—all that sort of thing, and it was a great disappointment to me when that was all put aside. But now I ask you, isn't the journalist, who, by the mere force of his pen, can mould public opinion, who can remain unknown, or at least almost unknown, and can overturn one Ministry and dictate a policy to another—isn't that man much greater than a mere member of Parliament, who is expected to vote as he is told? How many of our public men are there whose influence is half as great as Sydney's?'

Mrs. Carstairs spoke vehemently, her eyes flashed, a tinge of pale pink coloured her thin, worn cheeks.

We were interrupted by a disturbance in the drawing-room. The sonatina had ceased, and there was the sound of loud, angry voices. We found two unexpected visitors. One was a stoutish woman with a red face, apparently about fifty; the other was about half that age, and with a very fair share of good looks, in spite of evident signs of weakness and indifferent health. She carried a diminutive baby. Both were shabbily dressed, though the younger woman had made some ineffectual attempts at finery. The elder woman was brandishing Sydney's bouquet and screaming wildly at Miss Hilton.

'What 'ave you got to do with another woman's 'usband, I'd like to know. Sixteen shillings and sixpence he give for them flowers. I seen him. Sixteen shillings and sixpence, and his poor children crying because they haven't had enough to eat, poor

little dears, and his lawful wife as he promised to love and cherish hardly able to stand with her baby not six weeks old, and not a penny has he brought into the home for the last month, and I may toil and moil, and he can dress himself up as if he was the lord of the land, and chuck his money away as if his pockets were stuffed with bank-notes—him that can't earn ten shillings a week, and can't find nobody to trust him with half-a-crown! Him a canvasser, indeed! Why, he had much better stop in the shop than wear out his boot-leather when he can't do nothing a'cause of his being so shabby. Why, they turn him out of any respectable place. And my daughter, as might have married a plumber's young man who has now got a shop of his own, and makes his four pound a week regular!'

This is only a sample of the lady's oratory. She said a good deal more, while the younger woman sat down and attended to the claims of the baby, who had begun to cry.

We all remained speechless while the tirade was being delivered. Miss Hilton, very pale, stood clutching the piano, and gazing alternately, now at Sydney, and now at the woman with the baby. Mrs. Carstairs stood in wide-eyed astonishment, not comprehending the scene or what she was hearing.

'Sydney,' she said at last, turning to her son, 'what does this mean? Who are these people?'

He had been standing motionless with downcast head, but at his mother's appeal he came forward, and with an air of forced calmness said :

'Mother, this lady is my mother-in-law, Mrs. Thompson, and this is my wife, and this is my youngest child. There are two others. Your ideas about me need some slight correction. I don't write for the "Times," nor for anything else. It is true that I am connected with the Press, but I am only a canvasser, and a canvasser for some of the poorest and meanest papers that ever were printed. On the whole, I am a little superior in rank to the men whom you see carrying boards in the streets. I earn very little money, and sometimes none at all. I couldn't get on without Mrs. Thompson, who has just been expressing her views so powerfully, though perhaps a trifle incoherently. She keeps a shop, where we sell bottles of lemonade and sweets and marbles and penny weekly newspapers. And sometimes we do badly, and then we don't have enough to eat, and sometimes we do better, and then we have shrimps for tea. And, mother——'

He stopped ; a sort of spasm seemed to check his utterance and to run like a wave through his whole body. Then crying—

‘ My God ! my God ! I can’t bear it ! ’ he fell on the sofa and buried his head in the cushions. The poor mother tottered to his side.

‘ My poor Sydney ! ’ she said, softly, ‘ my poor, poor boy ! ’

Miss Hilton was the next to speak.

‘ Don’t you think,’ she said, turning to me, ‘ that there are too many of us here ? Perhaps Mrs. Thompson and the new Mrs. Carstairs would like to retire.’

Mrs. Thompson followed her daughter out of the drawing-room, but her tongue was not to be silenced. She felt bound to explain the order of events : she had seen the address on a letter her son-in-law had written ; she had watched, and had seen him go to a coffee-house and emerge in evening dress ; she had followed him to Covent Garden, and witnessed the purchase of the bouquet, and then she had gone home and shut up the shop, and had come down by train, bringing her daughter with her. She expressed her determination to take Sydney back with her, but a bank-note astonished her into silence and compliance with my views, which were that she should leave at once. An empty cab happened to be passing and received the party. But before that Miss Hilton had a short colloquy with Sydney’s wife.

‘ So,’ she said, in a harsh tone, ‘ you are his wife, and that’s his baby ! Does he ever beat you, I wonder ? ’

The woman looked astonished.

‘ Oh no, miss ! ’ she said ; ‘ he’s a good ‘ usband, and he does what he can when he has the means. Only, I don’t hold with him buying flowers when his children haven’t got enough to eat.’

‘ I don’t believe he’s a good husband,’ Miss Hilton replied. ‘ He’s a treacherous coward. But if he beats you, you deserve it. It is you that keep him down in the gutter—you and your precious parcel of babies.’

The poor woman was frightened at the young lady’s violent tone, and shrank away in a corner of the cab. But she was unwilling to leave without her husband, and Mrs. Thompson took the same view of the position. They had, however, grasped the fact that Sydney was with his mother, and they were persuaded to drive off. After the sound of the wheels had died away Miss Hilton, with a hasty good-night, rushed off to her own room.

When I got back to the drawing-room Sydney hadn't moved from the sofa. The failure of the well-meant efforts at deception which he had maintained so long was the cruellest blow fortune had dealt him, and it broke him down completely. He was sobbing like a child, and his mother, sitting by his side, was trying to comfort him, in the same way that she had soothed his infant troubles, with tender caresses and only half-articulate words. She waved me a mute farewell with her disengaged hand, and I left the house.

I never saw her again. My wife called twice at the little cottage at Kew, but the mistress was not to be seen. A third visit after some lapse of time found the house untenanted and empty, and inquiries in the neighbourhood elicited nothing.

But nearly two years later I was introduced to a Mrs. Malcolm, a newly married lady, in whom I recognised the former Miss Hilton. From her I learned that Mrs. Carstairs had been dead for some time.

'She never got over that night,' the young lady said; 'all her life clung round these illusions as to her son's career, and the revelation killed her. She tried to put a good face on the matter; she went over to see the children once or twice, and when the baby had measles the two grandmothers made a great fuss about him, and became almost friendly. But she could never really reconcile herself to the state of things: the little shop where they sold lemonade and sweets and horrible little papers, and Sydney, shabby, penniless, almost despairing—all this was too much for her. She died. Pneumonia the medical certificate called it.'

Mrs. Malcolm was silent for a few moments, and then began again :

'Do you think you will ever see Sydney again—Mr. Carstairs, I should say?'

I expressed my doubts.

'If you do,' Mrs. Malcolm said, 'give him a message from me.' She hesitated, and looked down. 'You know there were two of us who had illusions. Tell him I forgive him, and wish him well.'

Mrs. Malcolm's message had to wait nearly three years to get delivered. Then one day I had a visit from Carstairs. He came to repay me the 10*l.* he had borrowed for his mother's birthday dinner, and explained why he had not seen me before.

‘I’ve been living in the Midlands, and then I wanted to come with the money in my hand.’

I gave Mrs. Malcolm’s message, but I could see that the mischief he had done in deceiving that lady had never occupied a prominent position in his thoughts.

‘Then you know of my mother’s death?’ he said. ‘It was sudden at the last, and I suppose it was what people would call a happy release. There was nothing for her to live for when I had turned out a failure. Her mind was a little disturbed some weeks before she died, and there were times when she seemed to forget all about that terrible evening, and to think of me in the old way. Then she died, and it was I who killed her.’

He was silent for a moment and then said: ‘It’s the saddest thing in life that some men seem doomed to break the hearts of those they love best.’

To change the dolorous direction of his thoughts I asked if he was doing better in business.

‘Yes,’ he replied gravely, ‘things are not so bad as they were. I work for a good paper and get a regular salary. I secured Condensed Cocoa and two of the soap people. We are not so poor as we were; mother left us all she could leave, and it makes things easier, and Mrs. Thompson is really very good now. My eldest daughter too is a great comfort; we are all so proud of her, she is so good and does so well at school.’

Since that interview I have never seen Carstairs to speak to, or heard of him. But I caught sight of him once coming out of Charing Cross Station; he looked grey and bent—premature old age had plainly set its mark upon him. A very sweet-looking child of about eleven years of age was with him. They had evidently had a day in the country together, for his boots were dusty, and she held in one hand a bunch of wild flowers; the other hand clasped his, and as I watched them slowly crossing Trafalgar Square I was pleased to think that Destiny, which had meted out such hard measure to my old schoolfellow, had sent consolation for his latter years in the guise of that graceful child.

THE ADVANCE OF ADVERTISEMENT.

It is generally believed, by the simple and unlearned, that the art of advertising is of comparatively modern invention, but a very slight study of the subject will be sufficient to convince the inquirer that it is, in point of fact, one of the most ancient of all the civilised arts. Indeed, the first advertisement was probably coeval with the first man who had something to dispose of, or with the first woman who wanted something she had not got. It seems not impossible that the serpent tempted Eve to partake of the apple by means of a 'puff paragraph' setting forth the merits of the fruit as a complexion beautifier. Be that as it may, the uses of advertisement were known, at a very early date, to the Israelites, who were accustomed to placard the streets of their cities with the utterances of kings and prophets. The ancient Greeks, too, were much given to advertisement, chiefly through the medium of the town crier, who, however, was not permitted to offend the ears of the citizens with his proclamations unless he were accompanied by a musician to give him the correct pitch. The fact that property had been stolen or damaged was made known by means of curses, inscribed upon sheets of lead, which were affixed to the statues of infernal deities in the temple, the vengeance of the gods being thus invoked upon the persons who had stolen or injured the advertiser's goods. A rider was usually added, to the effect that should the property be returned, or recompence be paid, the owner would intercede with the gods for a remission of the punishment.

The Romans also made use of the town crier to proclaim laws, victories, or sales, and the walls of the streets were covered with notices painted in black or red, or inscribed upon terra-cotta slabs and let into the pillars on either side of houses and shops. Many of these wall advertisements were found in Herculaneum and Pompeii, among the most interesting being the announcements of the gladiatorial games, containing promises that shelter would be provided in case of rain, and that the sand would be watered should the weather be exceptionally warm.

In the dark ages, when knowledge of reading and writing was almost confined to the clergy, the pedlar was the chief newsagent

and advertising medium. The public crier was still in existence, but his office was almost a sinecure, except for occasional proclamations of war or peace. As civilisation advanced, however, he found a more extended sphere, and as early as 1141 we hear of the wine criers, who perambulated the streets carrying samples of their wares, being an organised body in France; while in England the town crier, who used a horn instead of a bell, was an important institution by the end of the thirteenth century. It was not long before street advertisements of various kinds came into general use. Signs were hung in front of shops to indicate the wares sold within, and tradesmen stationed touters at their doors who shouted 'What d'ye lack?' to the passers-by and lauded the quality of their masters' goods. The town and country houses of the nobility were used as inns in the owners' absence, and as the family arms always hung outside the door, it is easy to understand the predilection of the professional innkeepers of later days for dragons, lions, and other heraldic animals as the ornaments of their signboards.

Written handbills and placards were used for public notices of all kinds, while almost as soon as the art of printing was invented it was applied to purposes of advertisement. The first poster ever printed in England is supposed to be that by which Caxton, in 1480, announced the sale of 'Pyes of Salisbury use.' These 'pyes' were neither sweet nor savoury, being nothing more tempting than a collection of ecclesiastical rules as practised in the diocese of Salisbury. The advertisement runs: 'If it please any man spiritual or temporal to buy our pyes of two or three commemoracio's of Salisburi use, emprynted after the form of this present lettre, whyche ben wel and truly correct, late him come to Westmonester, into the almonestrye at the reed pole, and he shal have them good and chepe; supplico stet cedula.'

With improvements in printing, pamphlets began to be enlarged and to appear more frequently. As early as 1524 small books of news were published in Germany at irregular intervals. The first attempt at anything in the nature of a newspaper advertisement is to be found in a German newsbook for the year 1591, which contains items of news of the three preceding years, including accounts of the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the murder of Henri III. of France. A certain strange plant having appeared near the town of Soltwedel—in token, it was believed, of Divine wrath—one Doctor Laster wrote a book about it, which

book, observes the editor of the pamphlet, 'shows and explains what this plant contains. Curran has published it, and Matthew Welach has printed it in Wittemberg. Let whoever does not know the meaning of this portent buy the book at once, and read it with all possible speed.'

In England, the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 caused an unusual demand for news, insomuch that Samuel Butler, a bookseller, conceived the idea of printing a weekly news-letter from the Venetian gazettes, which had hitherto circulated in manuscript. Although this venture, which Ben Jonson ridiculed in his 'Staple of News,' was not a success, it was imitated by other enterprising booksellers, and the foundation of our periodical literature was laid. The earliest authentic English newspaper advertisement is believed to be the following, which appeared in the 'Mercurius Politicus' for January, 1652: 'Irenodia Gratulatoria, Heroick Poem; being a congratulatory panegyrick for my Lord General's late return, summing up his successes in an exquisite manner. To be sold by John Holden in the New Exchange, London.'

In the same paper, in 1658, appeared the first public mention of 'that Excellent and by all Physicians approved China drink, called by the Chineans tcha, by other nations Tay *alias* Tee.' The price of the variously spelt drink is not stated, but some years earlier tea was sold at from 6*l.* to 10*l.* per pound. Coffee-houses were opened in London in 1652, when flaming advertisements appeared, setting forth the innumerable virtues of 'cophee,' which seems to have been regarded as a panacea for every earthly ill.

The 'Public Advertiser' made its appearance in 1657, and its contents, as the name implies, consisted chiefly of advertisements. Other papers were quick to adopt the same easy and lucrative method of filling a part of their columns, but as yet announcements of fairs, robberies, and the departure of coaches, together with appeals for the return of strayed horses, lost dogs, and runaway apprentices, were more common than strictly trade advertisements. The many dogs of Charles II. were constantly getting lost or stolen, and the following description of a vanished favourite is supposed to have been dictated by the Merry Monarch himself: 'We must call upon you again for a Black Dog, between a greyhound and a spaniel, no white about him, only a streak on his brest, and Tayl a little bobbed. It is his Majesties' own Dog, and doubtless was stolen, for the Dog was not born or bred in

England, and would never forsake his master. Whosoever finds him may acquaint any at Whitehall, for the Dog was better known at Court than those who stole him. Will they never leave robbing his Majesty? must he not keep a Dog? This Dog's place (though better than some imagine) is the only place which nobody offers to beg.'

In 1664 all frivolous notices suddenly disappear, and the advertisement columns are filled with announcements of infallible specifics against the plague, as well as with religious warnings and exhortations to repentance. Of the Great Fire in 1666 we find but little mention, and tradesmen seem to have lost a splendid opportunity of puffing themselves and their wares. Although thousands of persons were camping in the fields, and streets and shops were extemporised for the public convenience, there are few notices of changed addresses, and none of 'alarming sacrifices of damaged stock' or statements that 'business will be carried on as usual during the repairs.'

In 1682 a certain John Houghton started a paper called 'A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry,' which was intended for the convenience of farmers and tradesmen, and consisted chiefly of price-lists and trade advertisements. With regard to these the proprietor states: 'I shall receive all sorts of advertisements, but shall answer for the reasonableness of none, unless I give a particular character on which may be *dependance*, but no argument that others deserve not as well.' The paper appears to have been conducted in most straightforward, honest fashion by worthy John Houghton, who actually found time to inquire into the merits of the servants and the masters who advertised in his columns. Many of these insertions read quaintly enough, for the editor addresses the public in his own person, and in most confidential terms, as, for example: 'I want a pritty boy to wait on a gentleman who will take care of him and put him out an apprentice.' 'I know of several curious women that would wait on ladies to be housekeepers.' 'I want a complete young man, that will wear livery, to wait on a very valuable gentleman, but he must know how to play a violin or a flute.'

The very limited extent of the London of that day is shown by the vagueness of some of the trade advertisements, which simply state that: 'Last week was imported Bacon by Mr. Edwards, Cheese by Mr. Francis, Joynted Babies by Mr. Harrison,' and so forth. After a time, however, it seems to have occurred

to the proprietor that it might be a convenience to his readers to know the advertisers' addresses, for he observes, in his usual simple, homely fashion : ' If desired I'll set down the places of abode, and I'm sure 'twill be of good use ; for I am often asked it.' Mr. Houghton afterwards extended his connection among all circles, for his columns are filled with advertisements of doctors, lawyers, barbers, the sale of livings, and even matrimonial wants. In fact, he may be said to have done more than any one man to train his contemporaries in the art of advertising.

The theatrical managers were strangely slow in taking advantage of the new method of obtaining publicity. The first newspaper advertisement of a dramatic entertainment appeared in the ' Flying Post ' for July 4, 1700. This was to the effect that at the New Theatre, Lincoln's Inn Fields, the ' Comical History of Don Quixote ' will be acted, together with ' a new entry by the little boy, being his last time of dancing before he goes to France ; also Mrs. Elford's new entry, never performed but once,' &c. The entertainment, it appears, was for the benefit of a gentleman in great distress, and his wife and three children.

The schoolmaster was already very much abroad, and he quickly became a proficient in the art of advertising. Early in the eighteenth century a Mr. Switterda announces that ladies and gentlemen who desire in a very short time to speak Latin, French, or High Dutch fluently, and can spare but two hours a week, will be faithfully taught by him according to a very easy and delightful method, full, plain, most expeditious and effectual. ' Everyone,' he continues, ' is to pay according to his quality from one to four guineas a month, but he (Mr. Switterda) will readier agree by the great.' A good contrast to the above is the plain and homely description of ' A school about forty miles from London. The master has had such success with boys as there are almost forty ministers and masters that were his scholars. His wife also teaches girls lace-making, plain work, raising paste, sauces and cooking to a degree of exactness. His price is 10*l.* or 11*l.* the year, with a pair of sheets and one spoon, to be returned if desired.'

Space being limited in eighteenth-century newspapers, advertisements were generally short and to the point, seldom exceeding eight lines of narrow measure. The usual price for an insertion of this kind was one shilling ; but the ' Country Gentleman's Courant ' introduced the innovation of charging by the line, giving

the following rather Irish reason for the change: 'Seeing that promotion of trade is a matter which ought to be encouraged, the price of advertisements is advanced to twopence a line.' A temporary blow was dealt to the art of advertising in 1712 by the imposition of a tax of three-and-sixpence upon each insertion; but after a depression lasting only a few months, we find the advertiser occupying as much space as ever in the columns of all the papers.

The rapid advance that had already been made in the art began to attract the attention of distinguished men, and in 1710 an article upon advertising appeared in the 'Tatler' from the pen of Addison. The writer states that it is his custom in dearth of news to entertain himself with the collections of advertisements that are published at the end of the public prints. 'These,' he continues, 'I consider accounts of the little world, in the same manner that the foregoing parts of the paper are from the great. . . . An advertisement from Piccadilly goes down to posterity with an article from Madrid, and John Bartlett of Goodman's Fields is celebrated in the same paper as the Emperor of Germany. The great art of writing advertisements is,' he explains, 'the finding out a proper method to catch the reader's eye, without which a good thing may pass unobserved, or be lost among commissions of bankruptcy. . . . But the great skill in an advertiser is chiefly seen in the style that he makes use of. He is to mention the "universal esteem" or "general approbation" of things that were never heard of. If he is a physician or astrologer he must change his lodging frequently; and though he never saw anybody in them beside his own family, give public notice of it "for the information of the nobility and gentry." This article attracted the attention of a gentleman who, under the pseudonym of 'Self-interested Solicitor,' wrote to Mr. Isaac Bickerstaff to explain that he had made himself master of the whole art of advertising, both as to the style and the letter, and continued: 'Now if you and I could so manage it that nobody should write advertisements but myself, or print them anywhere but in your paper, we might both of us get estates in a little time.'

In 1759 Dr. Johnson followed Addison's example, and devoted an article in the 'Idler' to the same important subject. After remarking that the trade of advertising was then so near perfection that it was not easy to propose any improvement, he proceeds to remind every man who advertises his own excellence that 'he

should write with some consciousness of a character which dares to call the attention of the public. He should remember that his name is to stand in the same paper with that of the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Germany, and endeavour to make himself worthy of such association.' Johnson bestows ironical commendation upon the modest candour of the vendor of a beautifying fluid, which 'repels pimples, drives away freckles, smooths the skin, and plumps the flesh, but does not profess to restore the roses of fifteen to a lady of fifty'; while he also admires the zeal for the ease and safety of teething infants shown by the inventor of the Anodyne Necklace, and the affecting terms in which he warned every mother that she would never forgive herself if her infant should perish without a necklace. It would be interesting to know what the great Doctor thought of a certain advertisement in the '*Spectator*' of a 'grateful electuary for the cure of loss of memory or forgetfulness, enabling those whose memory was before almost totally lost, to remember the minutest circumstances of their affairs to a wonder. Price two-and-sixpence a pot.'

No little insight into the social life of the eighteenth century may be gained by a study of contemporary advertisements. There are announcements of boxing matches and other athletic contests between women, an offer of ten shillings reward for the return of a South Sea dividend worth 630*l.*, a notice of a sale of silks, including 'Brocades, Tissues, Tabbies, Ducapes, Raschmores, &c.', and numerous advertisements of negro boys, which last throw a curious light upon the manner in which our coloured brethren were regarded little more than a century ago. The following, which appeared in 1769 and 1779 respectively, are typical specimens of the latter class of advertisement: 'For sale, a chestnut gelding, a trim-whiskey, and a well-made, good-tempered black boy'; 'To be sold by auction, a black boy of fourteen, and a large mountain tiger-cat.'

The introduction, about the middle of the eighteenth century, of a system of numbering the houses and shops gradually led to the disappearance of the picturesque shop signs, which had attained to great size and a high degree of magnificence. The cost of these very effective trade advertisements varied from one hundred to five hundred pounds apiece, the most valuable being handed down from father to son as heirlooms. Some of our most distinguished English artists—Morland, Hogarth, Cox, and Wilson—have not disdained in early days to lend their talents to the sign-painting art,

while the ironwork upon which the boards were hung gave scope for much gracefulness and originality of design. Still, the system of numbering the houses must have been a great convenience to all concerned, if we may judge from the clumsy and roundabout directions in such announcements as the following: 'To be Lett, Newbury House in S. James' Park, next door but one to Lady Oxford's, having two balls at the gate, and iron railings before the door.'

In matrimonial notices the fortune possessed by the bride was usually stated, as for example: 'On February 24, 1734, the Hon. Francis Godolphin of Scotland Yard Esq., to the third daughter of the Countess of Portland, a beautiful lady of 50,000*l.* fortune.' The lot of an heiress a hundred years ago was not invariably a happy one, judging from an advertisement which appeared in the 'Post' in 1775, and which seems to contain, between the lines, the nucleus of a romantic novel: 'A Gentleman of Honour and property, having in his disposal a young Lady of good Family, with a Fortune of 60,000*l.* on her marriage with his approbation, would be very happy to treat with a man of Fashion and Family, who may think it worth his while to give Advertiser a gratuity of 5,000*l.* on the day of Marriage.'

The art of advertising advanced slowly but steadily from the end of the eighteenth to the middle of the present century. The reduction of the tax upon newspaper advertisements in 1832, and the abolition of all duty in 1853, naturally gave a great impetus to this department of the art. There are now upwards of four thousand papers and magazines in the United Kingdom, and all of these devote more or less space to the needs of the advertiser, the 'Times' alone publishing more than three thousand advertisements daily. As civilisation has advanced the methods and opportunities of advertising have increased, so that it would be impossible so much as to enumerate them all unless we had the whole space of this magazine at our disposal. The old-fashioned bellman and sandwich-man are still with us, while the primitive billsticker, who used to paste over his rival's bills, is now represented by the contractor, who takes acres of hoarding and displays gigantic posters thereon to the best possible advantage. Railways and omnibuses have opened out new and brilliant opportunities to the advertiser, as have the electric light and various mechanical contrivances for attracting the attention of the public. Sky signs have fallen into disgrace, but the bilious yellow boards bearing

puffs of liver pills and lung tonic which have sprouted up in the fields to a distance of thirty or forty miles from London still flourish unchecked.

The society that has been started for the protection of wild nature from the outrages of the advertiser will have its hands full if the American fashion of puffing squalid and repulsive articles of commerce upon cliff, rock, and mountain and meadow continues to be imported into this country. Still, it must be confessed that, of late years, the art of advertising has improved in the matter of quality as well as of quantity. Enterprising tradesmen now give commissions to Royal Academicians, and the designing of newspaper and theatrical posters has become quite a recognised branch of pictorial art. This is as it should be, since no human power can stop the advance of advertisement. All that can now be done is to endeavour to make puffs and posters as picturesque as possible, and to prevent the desecration of historic buildings or beautiful scenery by the vandal inventor of soap, pill, or tonic.

AN INCIDENT FROM BORDERLAND.

I.

‘Is that cigar all right, Probyn? And the toddy? You are sure? Because I am going to try your patience a little, old chap. I have a bit of a yarn to spin. Only—there is a surprise for you at the end of it.’

‘Then let us come to the surprise as fast as we can, Houghton.’

That is one of the things that I like in Jack Probyn. With an old chum he never hesitates to speak straight out what he thinks.

He leaned back in the armchair I had given him, and fixed his eyes on the smoke climbing towards the ceiling. I do not mind admitting that his face expressed a shade of patient resignation.

‘All right,’ I assented; ‘I will be brief. You know that I have this fine old house at a ridiculous rent?’

‘Because your landlord is a fool.’

‘Or because he could not get anyone to pay more—nor, indeed, let the house at all, till I took it.’

‘On account of the apparition, ghost, spirit, spook, or the Lord knows what! Only you are not going to tell me about that, Houghton, I hope. I am quite able to understand the tenant’s asserting the thing to exist, if that reduces the rent. But that anyone believes it, you will permit me to doubt.’

‘The servants believe it, in consequence of which nothing will persuade them to stay. You will admit that it is a nuisance never to be able to keep any domestics. I am reduced to my coloured man, Pompey, who would not leave me were I quartered in Hades. Fortunately the boys are at Oxford; and as I have sent my wife and the girls to Brighton, I manage somehow. You have heard, I presume, what my wife and the girls say? They have got the ghost a little on the nerves.’

‘A little, you call it! You did quite right to pack them off. Women imagine all sorts of things when a notion once gets into their heads.’

‘Only I am getting rather sick of it all; that is why I want to talk to you about it.’

‘Well, I take it you have not seen the ghost?’

‘The first time I did so I took a blue pill.’

Probyn removed his cigar from his lips.

‘Don’t be an ass, Houghton.’

‘A man is not an ass because he takes a blue pill. And when it happened again I went at once to see my medical man. A man has no right to see things of that kind.’

‘Certainly not, I should say.’

I noticed that he was fidgeting with his shoulders.

‘Do you feel a draught?’ I asked.

‘No; but I fancy it is rather cold.’

I put some more coals on the fire.

‘What did the doctor say? I am a little curious to hear that,’ asked Probyn, as I resumed my seat.

‘Asked a lot of questions, and seemed a good deal puzzled. I could not make out that he understood what had happened any better than I did.’

‘Doctor seems to belong to the same class as landlord. I should change him.’

‘I thought of that, too. Then, to cut it short, I got him to come round here one evening, when it appeared that he was as much in need of medical treatment as myself.’

‘You don’t mean that he saw the spook, too?’

‘He did. Though he attempted afterwards to deny it, and was as savage about the whole business as a bear.’

Probyn broke into a frank roar of laughter. When it ended, I asked :

‘Would you mind looking behind you, in the direction of the bookshelves on your right?’

For the last three or four minutes I had seen seated there, on something resembling the dim outline of a high-backed chair, a shadowy form with which I was becoming tolerably familiar. It was that of an old gentleman with a pale, thin face, who wore a puce-coloured coat that had wide lappels and skirts trimmed with gold lace, a flowered satin waistcoat, a white cravat with laced ends, silk knee-breeches and stockings, and shoes with buckles. His hair was powdered, and tied at the back with a ribbon. The colours of his garments were a little difficult to distinguish. They seemed to come and go like an uncertain light that eludes the eyes. But the pale, translucent figure, and the darker, tall-backed chair, were very clearly defined, although the floor and the wall

beyond could be plainly seen through them. The old man's thin hands rested upon a gold-headed cane. Now and then he would rest his pointed chin upon them. At such moments the light in his eyes appeared to me to become more distinct, and to turn in different directions, as if he were looking about the room. Otherwise he never moved.

'By Jove!' exclaimed Probyn. 'I say, Houghton, how is that done?'

He continued to smoke whilst looking at the shadowy figure, perfectly at his ease. That is another thing I like in Jack Probyn: nothing ever disturbs his astounding mental equilibrium. The old man dropped his chin upon the top of his cane, and returned his regard.

'On my soul, Houghton, that's damned clever!' said Probyn. 'How the deuce do you manage it?'

He was looking round him, in search of some explanation of an optical delusion. Finding none, he rose and began walking about the room, turning his head to see whether the figure always remained visible.

'You can walk through him, if you like,' I remarked. 'You will find it rather cold, that is all.'

He immediately acted on my suggestion.

'That was a deuced queer sensation,' he remarked after making the experiment. 'Have you tried with a thermometer? Does it go down if you put it into him?'

'It does not. I tried.'

'Look here! Would you mind leaving the room for a minute, Houghton?'

'Not at all.'

On my return I asked, 'Well?'

'I fancied it depended on your presence. I see it does not. If we lower the gas—Ah!—he had done so as he spoke—'now he is not so clear.'

'Wait till your eyes are accustomed to the gloom.'

'By Jove! you are right. He is more distinct than ever, only you can't see the colour of his clothes so well. How is it done, Houghton?'

'That is what I want to know.'

He was going round the room, looking under the chairs and tables, and moving the furniture.

'It fairly beats me,' he said at last with a laugh.

'Let us go into the dining-room, then ; because it is rather cold here, is it not ? We can come back by-and-by, if you like. He will be here until three o'clock in the morning.'

II.

In the dining-room Probyn re-filled his glass and lit another cigar ; we had brought the cigars and spirits with us. Then, leaning his shoulders against the chimneypiece, he said, 'That is about the cleverest thing I have ever seen, Houghton. But tell me straight, old chap—because I shall take your word, you know—it is not an optical dodge, but I am under some influence—hypnotic, or mesmeric, or something of that kind ?'

'Not at all.'

'There is some hanky-panky, old chap ?'

'None. You have simply seen what all the rest have seen ; what the doctor saw ; what anyone may see in the library from eleven o'clock on Saturday evening till three on Sunday morning : that is the old boy's time. I have watched him for some weeks now, and know.'

'On your word of honour, old chap ?'

'On my word of honour.'

Probyn sat down, and smoked for some minutes in silence.

'Then I have seen a ghost,' he said at last. 'I did not believe that it was possible, but it seems that it is possible. One lives and learns.'

'I do not say that it is a ghost. I only say that it is there ; that anyone can see it who chooses, and that I cannot account for it.'

Again Probyn was silent for some minutes. Then he asked : 'Have you spoken to him, Houghton ?'

'Yes. I asked him his name.'

'Did he answer ?'

'I fancied that I heard a sort of answer—in the air ; just as if someone had said "Simon." But you know that vulgar report asserts the house to be haunted by a Sir Simon Sheriff, who lived here in the latter half of the eighteenth century. And I may have been self-deceived.'

'Possibly. That was all you could get him to say ?'

'I asked some other questions, but I could not make out that I received any answers.'

‘You have not had the floor up under the spot where he sits? Or received any hints from him about what he wants? He has not been pointing to a chink in the wall, where a thousand pounds lie concealed, or anything of that sort?’

‘I regret to say that he has not. But I did have the floor up. I insisted that there was an escape of gas, or of something, and made them go down twenty feet to find it. Only, they found nothing. And I paid a long bill for my folly. I fancy I deserved it, you know.’

‘Perhaps you did deserve it. What I said was nonsense.’

He had risen, and was again standing before the fire, smoking meditatively.

‘I am thinking, Houghton,’ he remarked, after a minute or two, ‘your landlord *is* a fool. There cannot be two opinions about that. Now, look here, what would you pay to see a real ghost?’

‘Taking into consideration the old gentleman in the next room, I don’t think I would pay anything. I might give something to be rid of one.’

‘Yes; but how many people do you suppose there are in London who would give ten guineas on the nail without an instant’s hesitation to see a real apparition? Don’t you perceive that there is money in that old gentleman in the next room? Why, Houghton, you might make a fortune out of him.’

I replied that I did not see exactly how that was to be done.

‘You cannot do it alone,’ admitted Probyn. ‘We must get hold of one of those medium impostors who knows all the patter, and will work the whole concern in a superior way. Deuce take it, man! cannot you see that it is grand? You have a show here that would make the fortune of any Spiritualist in London.’

And gently pushing off his cigar-ash against the edge of the mantelpiece, he added, ‘One of the things which has always convinced me that there are no haunted houses is the money that might be made out of one, if it existed.’

III.

WHEN Probyn has once taken a notion into his head there is no getting it out again. I had hoped that he might assist me to be rid of my nocturnal visitor. Instead, he had arrived at the conclusion that our old gentleman was a guest of the profitable kind. I did not see it. But I had to let him have his own way, and, after all, the result proved satisfactory. I had before that found things

placed in Jack Probyn's hands turn out satisfactorily, even when I least anticipated it. For which reason I assented the more easily to his proposals.

But I need not enter into the reasons why our choice of a 'medium' finally fell upon the celebrated Professor Sobiesczanski. We attended a *séance* conducted by the Professor (for which privilege we paid handsomely), and he certainly showed us some first-class hanky-panky. 'Only he is not in it with us, Houghton,' said Probyn. Nevertheless, we gave Professor Sobiesczanski to understand that we had been very much impressed. (I was very much impressed by his patter, which was really remarkable.) And we left him, I am sure, in the enjoyment of an agreeable conviction that we were going to let ourselves be fleeced easily; for which reason he also accepted an invitation to dine with me on the following Saturday.

It was about half-past ten when we moved from the dining-room to the library to smoke. Of course Probyn was with us. During dinner he had hung with great attention upon such words of wisdom as Professor Sobiesczanski vouchsafed us. They were not too many, for the fellow was an accomplished impostor. Nature herself had lent her assistance to his success in that direction. In person he was a tall man, whose closely shorn and sallow face, framed in his long, extraordinary black hair (dyed, I think), assisted the power to arrest attention of a singularly expressive mouth and queer, dark, restless eyes, that could, when he chose, fasten upon one with a disagreeable fixity. But his great gift was a soft, cultivated voice, in which he could talk in magnificent rounded periods, and with an air of superior knowledge, upon all the most abstruse questions of human philosophy and psychology. He was never for a moment at a loss. Occasionally he made hideous blunders that proved a crass ignorance of history, science, and everything else. But he was never daunted. Coolly presuming upon the still profounder ignorance of his hearers, he continued to roll out his soft periods until he reached whatsoever pretence or paradox he pleased. It was not the ordinary patter of his tribe. It was equally ridiculous and nonsensical, but was couched in language of his own. He spoke with a slight accent. I will not say that it was not a Polish one, being unacquainted with that tongue. But it seemed to me to belong to a land a good deal nearer the English Channel.

Towards the end of dinner Probyn had dropped one or two

hints that the house we were in was said to be haunted. The wary Sobiesczanski was instantly on his guard, and assured us that 'Though manifestations were undoubtedly to be looked for through the intervention of a responsive personality, ignorant rumours, based upon no sufficient acquaintance with the laws of the supernatural agencies, could not be accepted as evidence of any spiritual presence.'

We found that he did not smoke, nor would he accept anything in the shape of drink, except a *petit verre*.

Probyn had placed him in the position which he had himself occupied on the evening when I introduced Sir Simon to him, and began again to talk about the house being haunted.

The great Spiritualist smiled.

'An apparition seen by the maidservants, presumably?' he suggested.

'By some of them, I believe.'

Professor Sobiesczanski took a sip from his *petit verre*.

'It is singular,' he remarked, 'that when the odylic forces necessary to evoke the visible spiritual personality are admitted by all the initiated to be of rare occurrence even in the greatest mediums, every chance wench you may meet imagines that she can distinctly see an apparition.'

'Then to see is not so easy, even when the ghost is there?' asked Probyn.

'They are always there,' replied the Professor gravely.

'You don't say so! But how do you know that?'

'The initiated possess a susceptibility to the subtile impressions of their vicinity.'

Probyn looked at me. Sir Simon had taken his seat opposite us about a minute before. It did not appear from the manner in which Sobiesczanski sipped his *petit verre* that he was at all aware of the fact.

'Don't you think it rather cold here?' asked Probyn. 'Do you feel chilly, Professor Sobiesczanski?'

'It is, perhaps, a little chilly. But the night is cold.'

'Come nearer the fire,' I proposed.

Rising, I placed another seat for our visitor at my side. There he would be face to face with Sir Simon.

He crossed over, and was on the point of sitting down, when he gave a sudden start.

'Mon Dieu! What is that?'

His sallow face was the colour of ashes. He staggered, and for a moment I believed he would fall, and put out my hand to save him. Then, casting his dignity to the winds, he jumped, with sudden agility, over the chair on which I had been seated, and made a bolt for the door.

Probyn and I had taken the precaution of locking it.

‘Open the door! open the door!’

He stood in the corner, shaking with fear, fumbling at the handle, and quite unconscious, in his fright, that the key had been turned in the lock.

‘I am afraid that you are not feeling well, Professor Sobieszcanski,’ I said, coming to him. ‘Permit me——’

I opened the door, and he shot out of the room like an arrow. He would, I believe, have bolted from the house if he had not been too confused to know where his hat and coat were, or which was the way to the front door. As it was we got him into the dining-room. There I thought the fellow would have fainted.

Probyn made him drink a stiff glass of brandy-and-water. That pulled him together a little.

‘I am afraid you have never seen a real ghost before, Professor Sobieszcanski,’ said Probyn.

He was leaning back against the sideboard, smoking very complacently.

The Professor looked at him, and then at me.

He was fairly dished—and he knew it. I am convinced that he must have been in other hobbles of the same kind before, because he came out of this one so neatly.

‘You took me completely by surprise,’ he remarked.

And he held out his hand for the brandy, which stood by Probyn on the sideboard.

Probyn passed it him, and also offered his cigar-case.

‘Thanks,’ said the Professor, and at once accepted a weed.

‘You took me completely by surprise,’ he repeated, with a smile of a very peculiar kind, as he threw the vesta Probyn had handed him into the fire, and crossed his legs unceremoniously, whilst puffing a great cloud of smoke. ‘That was clever, too. I should like to see it done again presently. Only, of course, this is *entre nous*. I mean——’

‘Oh, we perfectly understand,’ returned Probyn. ‘We are not going to blab. It is not our cue.’

The Professor looked relieved.

'You see, Sobiesczanski,' continued Probyn, 'yours is very pretty hanky-panky. You amused us very tolerably the other evening.'

'Oh, but, you know, there is really something in it,' replied the Professor. 'There are supernatural agencies against whose—'

'You can just stow all that, Professor, at once,' interrupted Probyn, now taking a seat at the table opposite him. 'Your show is all fudge; and you know it. But you are a first-class showman, and that is why we want to talk business to you; *business*, you understand. What we have here is a real apparition. It is a magnificent opening, but we don't see our way to work it. That is why we want you to come in with us, and do the show properly.'

'What do you mean by a real apparition?' inquired Sobiesczanski.

'The house is haunted. That is a real ghost you saw in the other room. He is there every Saturday, from eleven o'clock in the evening till three on Sunday morning.'

Professor Sobiesczanski took his cigar from his mouth, and poked his tongue into his thin cheek. The action was vulgar, but expressive.

'I understand your disbelieving it, Professor Sobiesczanski,' I remarked, 'but I assure you that such is the case. You are at liberty to come here any Saturday night you please to satisfy yourself.'

'Only you don't blow the gaff; and when you *have* satisfied yourself, you go into the business with us,' added Probyn.

'If not, we shall talk to Dr. Harris,' I concluded.

That made the Professor think. Dr. Harris was running him very close.

'I'll go and look at it again,' he said at last. 'How many minutes must I give you to get ready?'

'There is nothing to get ready.'

The Professor regarded us mistrustfully. But he took a good pull at his glass, and said, 'I'll go at once, then.'

We returned together to the library. As we entered the room the old gentleman dropped his chin on his hands and regarded us.

Sobiesczanski stood looking at him.

'It is the best illusion I have ever seen,' he said.

He began going round the room just as Probyn had done, but scrutinising everything in a much more professional way.

'Walk through him,' said Probyn.

Sobiesczanski did so, and came back to us.

'You have beaten us all,' he said, in a tone of real admiration.

We returned to the dining-room—the library was so confoundedly cold.

'Well?' I asked.

'I'll give a thousand pounds to know how it is done,' said the Professor.

'I should think you would,' replied Probyn; 'only it is not done at all. You have at last seen a ghost. The question is, what will you pay to be allowed to bring a small party here on Saturday night?'

The Professor fidgeted in his chair. He knew too much of the tricks of his own trade to be quite able to credit what we told him. On the other hand, he had talked too much about ghosts to be able to disbelieve in them; and courage was evidently not his leading characteristic. Half scared, and wholly irresolute, he was an amusing specimen of a man drawn one way by his fears and another by his cupidity.

'If you funk it,' said Probyn, 'we'll go to Harris.'

'No, no! Don't go to Harris.'

'All right. Then let us come to terms.'

Professor Sobiesczanski showed an inclination to temporise. I believe now that the man was in a much greater fright than we suspected. The considerable quantity of spirits that he had drunk had also loosened his tongue, and he wanted us to listen to some of his rodomontade. But at last he agreed to pay ten guineas for the privilege of bringing a small, select party to the house on the following Saturday.

'It is dirt cheap, and we shall not let you come on those terms a second time, you know,' said Probyn.

I had doubts whether he would come at all. Probyn laughed at me. And he was right. The Professor's cupidity was more powerful than his fears. He arrived at about a quarter-past ten with his party, eight ladies and two gentlemen: not very intellectual specimens of humanity.

'Give me a glass of something stiff,' he gasped, coming into the dining-room, 'or I shall never get through it.'

'Take care; you are pretty well on already, you know,' observed Probyn.

The assistant was arranging the spectators in the library.

‘We ought to have something preliminary: a few manifestations of the ordinary kind, to lead up to the final materialisation,’ said Sobiesczanski. ‘Another time I’ll arrange a little show, just to work up the effect. I can’t to-night. I must be content with speaking a few words. If it comes off, anyhow, Harris will be nowhere.’

The perspiration was standing in beads on his forehead.

We proceeded to the library, and the Professor spoke his few words. Speaking when he was more than half-seas over was evidently not new to him. A silence of breathless expectation followed.

Stepping back to where we stood, behind the semicircle of seated watchers, the Professor placed himself at our side, and began wiping the perspiration from his forehead. He was as white as a sheet, and shaking like an aspen.

One of the women saw Sir Simon first, and gave such a shriek as I never heard in my life. Two minutes afterwards we were engaged in carrying out of the library four others who had fainted. The situation was one perfectly familiar to the Professor and his assistant, and caused them no embarrassment; indeed, I am convinced that the Professor was glad of the excuse for leaving the haunted room.

Our old gentleman was evidently surprised by the number of his visitors, and had immediately dropped his chin on his hands. He seemed to me, also, anything but pleased.

We got rid of our party before midnight. Sobiesczanski was as sober as a judge and in high spirits.

‘It will be all over the place to-morrow, and Harris will be fit to eat his hat,’ he said.

But the real *séance* was reserved for Probyn and myself.

As we returned to the dining-room after locking the front door—I with Sobiesczanski’s cheque for ten guineas in my hand—what was my surprise to see Sir Simon standing at the open door of the library!

‘Hulloa, Sir Simon!’ exclaimed Probyn.

The shadowy old man turned to me.

‘I am not going to be treated like this, sir—to be made a spectacle of in my own house,’ I heard him say distinctly and angrily, in that thin voice of the dead, who, according to Shakespeare, can but ‘gibber and squeak.’

I made a bow.

'I beg your pardon, Sir Simon; I am the tenant of the house. I can show you my landlord's agreement, and his receipt for my last quarter's rent. If you insist upon occupying one of our most convenient rooms, and making us all very uncomfortable, it is at least fair that you should contribute something towards the rent—and other expenses.'

I showed him the cheque.

'I am not going to be made a spectacle of for money, sir!' retorted the thin voice.

We left him, and lighted our cigars in the dining-room.

'The old boy is put out,' remarked Probyn presently, whilst we discussed the events of the evening. 'I wonder whether he has gone back to his chair.'

He left the room, and in a minute returned with the intelligence, 'Sir Simon has disappeared!'

'What is the time?'

'Only half-past twelve.'

And we never saw him again, though Probyn and I watched for him for weeks, until we were convinced that he had taken his final departure. When all hope, or fear, of his reappearance was over Professor Sobiesczanski wept.

'I had that charlatan Harris on toast,' he said. 'And now he is going about saying it was a mere optical delusion, like his own contemptible dodges.'

For my part, I gave the ten guineas to a hospital, and was glad to be relieved of the old gentleman.

But the other day, when I was talking to Probyn about it, he said, 'We made a pair of fools of ourselves over that business, Houghton. We killed the goose with the golden eggs. To think what might have been made out of that old boy if he had been properly managed!'

HAVANA.

WHEREVER the eye rests the scene is wholly unfamiliar to Northern eyes. On the green hills the graceful, umbrella-like palms and cocoanuts and the huge-leaved bananas fling their branches to the breeze. The houses, that are separated from the city and scattered about the surrounding shores, are low and rambling, and are either white, or, more odd still, blue, or pink, or green. Hardly has the great anchor rattled and splashed into the waters of the tranquil harbour before the ship is besieged by the most irregular-looking small boats. They are short and broad, and so strong that one might feel safe at sea in one. Each has an awning upon an arched frame over the after-part to shield the passenger from the sun's rays, and these awnings are painted, like the houses, in one bright colour or another, so that altogether they make the scene picturesque, and call to mind the hues of an Italian water view. Into one of these boats you descend, and your boatman, spreading a small sail, guides you to the landing before you have satisfied yourself with staring at the tropic vegetation, the swarm of boats, the men-of-war, the white forts, and the bareheaded women and coolly-clad men who have come out from the city in other boats to greet your fellow-passengers. Perhaps you do not notice it at once, but you are able to see farther and better than at home, for the air is usually as clear as crystal. You will notice, later on, that the sky is similarly clear, and as for the nights, they are beautiful beyond description. At the landing you find a cab convenient, and a hackman who will take you on any short journey for twenty cents. When comfort is considered, it will be found that riding in one of these comfortable *victorias* is far cheaper than walking.

You tell the coachman to drive you to one of the principal hotels. There are several that more or less nearly approach Cuban perfection: the *Pasaje*, *Telegrafo*, *San Carlos*, *Inglaterra*, *America*, or *Europe*; terms, \$3 to \$5 a day. Drive slowly, for from whatever part of the world you may come, rest assured you will never before have encountered such streets, houses, stores, or customs as will now be noticeable on every hand. The streets are very narrow; the sidewalks are seldom more than two feet wide in the older

parts of the city ; the houses are mainly broad and low, three-storey buildings being rare and one-storey structures quite common. You notice that everything is made to serve comfort and coolness. Instead of having panes of glass, the windows are open and guarded by light iron railings, and the heavy wooden doors are left ajar. You see into many houses as you pass along, and very cool and clean they look. There are marble floors, cane-seated chairs and lounges, thin lace curtains, and glimpses of courts in the centre of each building, often with green plants or gaudy flowers growing in them between the parlour and the kitchen. You will find much the same plan at your hotel. You may walk in at the doors or the dining-room windows, just as you please, for the sides of the house seem capable of being all thrown open ; while in the centre of the building you see the blue sky overhead. Equally cool do all the inhabitants appear to be, and the wise man who consults his own comfort will do well to follow the general example. Even the soldiers wear straw hats. The gentlemen are clad in underwear of silk or Lisle thread and suits of linen, drill, or silk, and the ladies are equally coolly appareled. Havana is a dressy place, and you will be astonished at the neatness and style to which the tissue-like goods worn there are made to conform. But come and see the apartment you are to rest in every night. Ten to one the ceiling is higher than you ever saw one in a private house, and the huge windows open upon a balcony overlooking a verdant plaza. The floor is of marble or tiling, and the bed is an ornate iron or brass affair, with a tightly stretched sheet of canvas or fine wire netting in place of the mattresses you are used to. You could not sleep on a mattress with any proper degree of comfort in the tropics. There is a canopy with curtains overhead, and everything about the room is pretty certain to be scrupulously clean. Conspicuous there and everywhere else that you go is a rocking-chair. Rocking-chairs are to be found in rows in the houses and in regiments in the clubs.

You will want to purchase some things, and the best shopping streets are Obispo Street, O'Reilly Street, and Ricla, commonly called Muralla Street. The shopkeepers have a way of throwing the entire fronts of their stores open in most cases, while in others, behind plate-glass in true New York style, are exposed fine collections of jewellery, silks, dry goods, bonnets, pictures, or *bric-à-brac*. You will notice that the Havanese have solved the bothersome American problem how to prevent storekeepers from littering

and blocking the sidewalk with goods. They have solved it simply by making the sidewalk too small to put anything on. Those irrepressible men and women who are ever on the alert to make profitable purchases in foreign lands will find bargains in Spanish laces, fans, and parasols, in the light goods that men wear, in the Spanish wines and liquors, and the Cuban cigars and jellies. The cheap street, like the Eighth Avenue or Bowery of New York, is Principe Alfonso, which your driver will know better if you call it Monte. You will notice with surprise that every store, instead of bearing the title of the proprietary firm, is called by a fancy name—viz. El Pueblo, Las Delicias, El Gallo, or more commonly by women's names, such as Rosita, Adelina, Antonica, or America. America is a woman's name in Cuba. They are great advertisers, and the sign 'Post no bills' in Spanish is commoner than you expect to find it outside of Boston. Those storekeepers do best who put awnings across the streets, and thus display their names and confer a public benefit as well. Shade is perfect coolness in Cuba. The sun is hot there, not damp and suffocating as here, but dry and tingling; and you step out of it beneath a tree or awning, and are cool at once. Then the mornings and evenings are delightful, and you will find these the best hours for your sight-seeing expeditions.

Havana is the metropolis of the West Indies. It has more life and bustle than all the rest of the Archipelago put together. If you are German, English, Scotch, Dutch, American, French, or whatever you are, you will find fellow-countrymen among its quarter of a million souls. There is a public spirit there which is rare in those climes. The theatres astonish you by their size and elegance. They are the Tacon, Payret, Nuevo Liceo, Verano, Cervantes, and the Circus, called Circo de Jane. Some of these have five galleries, and one, the Tacon, can accommodate 6,000 persons at a ball or 3,000 in the seats. It ranks fourth in size in the world. The Verano is a tropical establishment all open at the sides, and the Circus can be thrown open to the sky. The aristocratic club is the Union, but the popular one is the Casino Español, whose club-house is a marvel of tropical elegance and beauty. Nearly all these attractions are on or near the broad, shady, and imposing thoroughfare, the Prado—a succession of parks leading from the water opposite the Morro Castle almost across the city. In one or another of these parks a military band plays on three evenings of the week, and the scene on such occasions is wholly

new to English eyes. It is at such times that one may see the beautiful Spanish and Cuban women. They do not leave their houses in the heat of the day unless something requires them to do so, and when they do they remain in their carriages, and are accompanied by a servant or elderly companion. So strict is the privacy with which they are surrounded, that you shall see them shopping without quitting their carriages, waited on by the clerks, who bring the goods out to the vehicles.

But when there is music under the laurels or palms the señoritas, in their light draperies, and wearing nothing on their heads save the picturesque mantilla of old Spain, assemble on the paths, the seats, the sidewalks, and in the carriages, and there the masculine element repairs and is very gallant indeed. Here you will listen to the dreamy melody of these latitudes, Spanish love-songs and Cuban waltzes so softly pretty that you wonder all the world does not sing and play them. On other nights the walk or drive along the Prado is very interesting. You pass some of the most elegant of the houses, and notice that they are two storeys high, and that the family apartments are on the upper storeys, so that you miss the furtive views of the families at meals, and of ladies reclining in the broad-tiled window sills, that you have in the older one-storey sections of the city. When you see the carriages in the broad, stone-floored hallways, you are reminded of the story of the youth who came back from Havana to New York, and informed his friends that 'in Havana they have the carriages in the front parlour, and cigars grow on trees.'

'No,' said a Cuban girl who was present. 'That is not so. Cigars do not grow on trees there.'

But it is no more fair to say that the carriages are in the parlours than it would be to say the same thing of the English basement houses that were popular when building-room was not so dear in New York as it is now; for it will be remembered that they contained a carriage-way, and, indeed, were in many respects very like these two-storey Cuban houses. The smooth, stuccoed fronts of these houses, the huge, barred windows, which permit everything to be thrown open to the breeze, the inviting balconies overhead, and the general cleanliness of the interiors, will greatly interest you. The parks along the way are very pretty, especially that of Isabella II., whose statue looks a little like Victoria's; and the Indian Park, in which is a fountain embracing a statue of an Indian princess, the most artistic and ambitious public work

in the city. One block away, immediately behind the Hotel Pasaje, is a very great curiosity, a piece of the old wall of Havana. It marks the line between the old and the new city, and indicates the rapid growth of the newer portion. In this neighbourhood also is the Tacon Market, one of the largest and finest in the world. Do not miss a sight of its tropical commodities. Eat sparingly of the fruits, and remember that those who understand them are content with the refreshing juices of such of them as the pineapple, mango, and orange, and do not attempt to eat the pulp. The green cocoanuts that you see in such profusion are not full of meat like the ripe ones you get in America: they are merely vessels full of a cool, refreshing water. Drink all you want of it: it is cooling and nourishing. In any of the *cafés* that are so plentiful in the city you can get a big glass of *agua de coco* for a few pence. Tamarind-water is another excellent drink to be had at all refreshment counters. It cools the blood and regulates the stomach. Lemonade, which they make of juicy little limes, is also an excellent refreshment. Ice, made by man and not by Nature, is as plentiful as in New York. There are other markets—the Colon and the Cristina—and you should see them both in order to realise the wonders of this most rich and fertile soil and magic climate.

For expeditions on foot you have many points near at hand. First, there is the short walk to the cathedral. It is rather a shabby-looking edifice outside, for the volcanic stone so abundant in Cuba has not been plastered over, as is usually the case; but the surprise will be all the greater when you enter and see how costly and beautiful the interior is. The altar is exceptionally magnificent, and beside it rest the remains of him they call Cristobal Colon, known to all the rest of the world as Christopher Columbus. Persons of the sort who disbelieve in anything, from the miracle of Jonah and the whale to the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, will tell you that Columbus' ashes are somewhere else; but the weight of evidence is against that theory. A few steps distant is the oratory, El Templete, a monument to mark the spot where, in distant centuries, the first Mass ever said in Havana was celebrated. It is not so easy to believe, as they tell you, that the beautiful tree in the enclosure is the identical one under which the celebration took place; but the spot is especially interesting from the fact that, when Columbus' remains were first brought to Havana, it was in this little temple that they were

deposited. But do not leave the cathedral without having asked one of the clergy to let you look at the treasures stored in the anteroom to the left of the altar. This is one of the most notable sights in Cuba. In the closets are utensils of silver and gold in use before the altar on feast days; and one cupboard contains a triumph of the silversmith's art. It is a Gothic tower of the most elaborate and artistic design, all in pure silver, and ornamented with gold, jewels, and delicate filigree work. In the numerous drawers along the walls are the dresses worn by the clergy on special occasions, garments of silk and satin, encrusted or embroidered with gold and silver, and set with precious stones.

In this neighbourhood are other old churches; the big Government House and its little park, hemmed in by the bustle of downtown trade; the Fish Market, and the Mole, a covered *levée* about a mile in length, at which you landed, and which you will find interesting if you visit it again. Here, exposed as you are not accustomed to see them, are the products of all nations, newly removed from incoming vessels mainly by means of lighters, because of the scarcity of wharf room. It is a market place where, in the morning, you will see a great crowd of merchants, boatmen, labourers, gathered to buy and sell, and to employ and tender service. The bales and boxes, you see, are captured as resting-places by the boatmen, hackmen, and even the soldiers and custom-house men, and you begin to be impressed by something that you will do well to profit by—the fact that, as a rule, everybody takes life easily, and makes his habits and his business conform to the general custom. Business men go to their counting rooms early and do not leave them until late in the afternoon, except to breakfast at half-past ten or eleven o'clock. All Cuba, when it first gets up in the morning, takes a cup of coffee, and partakes of but two meals during the day—breakfast before noon and dinner at five or six o'clock. Accustom yourself to the same rule. Bathing should be indulged in between coffee and breakfast.

To see the utmost possibilities of comfortable living in Havana do not content yourself with driving in company with the fashionable folk in the Paseo de Carlos III., the beautiful, almost Parisian boulevard leading to the Captain-General's residence, but continue on to Cerro and Jesus de Monte, two fashionable suburbs of the city. In Cerro are some of the most palatial residences in Cuba. Great white houses they are, embowered in the verdant and gaudy splendour of well-kept tropic gardens, cooled by broad

verandahs whose roofs are supported by pretty Grecian pillars, and under which, in perfect enjoyment of the clear yet perfumed air, are gathered the young and old in the inevitable rocking-chairs. Pass by in the evening, and peep in where the mellow light of shaded lamps falls upon oriental rugs, soft laces, marble floors, rare and costly carvings and paintings, and upon the quiet families of blonde women and dark-skinned men bent over embroidery, books, or newspapers, or sipping ices and listening to the soft melody of the country: is there not something in all this for us business-ridden Britons to envy as well as admire? Vedado, also, should be visited. It compares with Cerro as Hoboken does with Brooklyn; but, though not aristocratic, it is very pretty. Then, for a longer and more rural expedition one should see the new Water Works, which are regarded as among the most notable engineering achievements of the time.

Then there is Marianao (pronounced Marry-a-now), a pretty place, loved for its cool breezes and its handiness to the sea-side, where there are bathing booths and little restaurants for excursionists. You go there by rail in quick time. Chorrera, a quaint fishing hamlet at the mouth of the Almendares River, is equally accessible. Here you may see the simple houses and interesting customs of the peasantry, as well as the odd vegetation and luxuriant verdure of the country. In the other direction, by taking the ferry to Regla, and a coach from there, is reached the interesting town of Guanabacoa, which rejoices in a mineral spa. Puentes Grandes, which means the Big Bridge, is a popular picnicing place; and another interesting journey is that one out to the mysterious old fort or castle upon a little rocky isle a few miles west of the city. The American Consul will cheerfully equip you with permits to see the famous fortifications. A more considerable journey, and yet one that can be quickly and easily accomplished, is that into the Vuelta Abajo, where the world-famous tobacco for the best cigars is raised. But far more interesting, and easily accomplishable between coffee and breakfast, is a trip to a sugar plantation. A permit can easily be got, but it must be obtained in Havana. The writer was equipped with one admitting him to the Toledo plantation, only half-an-hour distant on the Marianao Railroad. First he saw the mansion of the planter, a grand establishment, bigger than most city blocks, only one storey in height, yet taller than a two-storey-and-basement building at home. It rose out of a beautiful garden like a palace

of marble, and seemed eloquent of comfort as well as of the wealth and magnificence that, alas! have not, in most cases, withstood the trials of a revolution at home and an intense competition abroad. A gateway led into the estate, and here the porter took our permit and bade us follow the inviting road that led between waving fields of bright-green cane. At short distances broad roads intersected the fields to permit the labourers to gather the product and transport it easily. And here was an old-fashioned plantation slave scene—a cane break swarming with negroes. It was wonderful to see the men handle the machetes—broad, long, one-edged knives, the size of small swords. The glistening blades moved with the swiftness of thought. With one blow the cane-stalk was cut close to the ground, with another the leafy top was cut off, and then, as each man tossed a cane from him, he dealt it another blow in mid air and cut it in two. Other men and some women gathered up the canes, stripped them of leaves, and loaded waggons with them. A picturesque throng they were, thinly clad and hard at work, yet stout and strong and happy looking, and all standing on the very threshold of liberty. The cane was transported to the mill house—a vast, open building, distinguished by a tall smoking chimney and the loud hum of unceasing industry. Into a great run-way the cane was piled, and down that it slid into the jaws of two great rollers that squeezed and crushed the juices from it and cast out the dry and mangled stalks, while a flood of raw liquid sugar poured into the troughs below. On a second flooring overhead was the row of huge boilers or kettles, through a series of which this juice must pass before it is resolved into sugar; and finally were seen the centrifugal machines, from which it issued in small, dry, light-brown crystals, to be packed in bags by the long line of negroes at work there. The heavy odour of the sugar, not unlike the smell of malt, though sweeter, pervaded the great building, which, despite the boilers and kettles, was cool and pleasant. Then there were the slave quarters—a hollow square walled in by dormitories two storeys high, with a store full of supplies of clothing, medicines, and food, and a hospital room and nursery, and ever so many half-nude, shiny-black piccaninnies playing about. The shaded, cool house of the administrator or superintendent, where the plantation doctor, mounted on a big American horse, was paying a morning visit, was also picturesque.

But you will be a long while in Havana before you will have seen all these curious sights. Havana itself is a mine of pleasure

and a museum of curiosities. You will not care to bustle around when you get there as you do in America, or Switzerland, or Canada. The very atmosphere bids you rest and enjoy yourself. And not only that, it is medicinal, curative, and strengthening. Here are men and women, almost crippled at home and in the United States by rheumatism, now forgetful of their ailment and its vanished pains. Here throat and lung troubles, no longer harassed by damp breezes and sudden changes of temperature, are cured without medicine in a month, after the best physicians at home have failed to remove them. Here is a climate as reliable as the coming of day and night, never as cool as springtime in England or as hot as midsummer in London. When snow and ice bind up all nature in our country the thermometer daily points to 65° or 70° in Havana ; the grass and cane and foliage are brilliantly green, the flowers are blooming, the fruit is ripening, the birds are chanting in the boughs, and day and night succeed day and night under a sky seldom even flecked by clouds. The winter passes, the spring comes, and the mercury slowly rises 5° to 10°, and 75° to 80° is the temperature. The foliage takes on a darker green, the cane is harvested, the fruit is plucked, and the country-sides grow slightly brown for need of the long-awaited rain. When May is well ushered in the heat comes, and those Cubans who can afford it, together with those Americans who are able to enjoy perpetual summer, quit the verdant isle for Europe or the United States. Then the rainy season begins, and the days are very hot by contrast with the cool breezy nights.

From October until May Havana is an earthly paradise for tired or ill or weak or pleasure-loving Americans, and thousands who go there are satisfied not to leave it except to return to their homes. Unceasing is the interest one feels in this strange city. Hour after hour, and day after day may be spent in that climate, seated before the hotel, or at one's bedroom window, or on a balcony, merely watching the odd scenes constantly spread to the gaze. Soldiers in uniforms of a sort of blue jean, and with broad-brimmed straw hats, are as numerous here as horses in New York. They pass in couples, squads, or companies. The music of their bands rouses you in the morning and soothes you at night. There are four sorts of policemen, and in the lazy mood you will possess it will interest you for many days to learn to distinguish one sort from another and the name that each sort goes by. Do not let their presence mar your anticipations. They will not trouble you.

You will be as free from interference or restraint in Havana as in London—far freer. They still maintain the useless, old-fogey night watch, composed of men in glazed hats and dark uniforms, each equipped with a lantern, and carrying a staff something like a boat-hook and a spear combined. The lumbering carts, the long trains of horses or mules coming in from the country laden with fruit, vegetables, jerked beef, or what not; the milkmen carrying the milk in little cans packed away in panniers on a horse's back; the butchers vending their meat from waggons with lattice-work sides; the Chinese carrying their wares balanced at the ends of a pole upon one shoulder, like animated scales moving through the streets; the children selling 'panales'—little cakes of flaky sugar, to be melted in a glass of water and drank: a habit which reminds one of the old saying that, 'for those who like that sort of thing, one would think that would be just the sort of thing they would like.' These are but a few of the queer sights. Very interesting, also, are the thin but swift little Cuban horses; and, whether you will or not, the vendors of lottery tickets will claim your attention. In the street, in the store, at your meals, at your window, in the cars—in short, wherever you are, except when you are in a private house or in your bed—these remarkably enterprising peddlers will plead with you to try your luck. Chances in several lotteries are sold in Havana—viz. the Havana, Madrid, Kentucky, Mexico, and Porto Rico, and a large semi-idle portion of the population hawk the tickets about. The cigar and cigarette factories, whose brands are world famous, are objects of interest to the tourist, and the proprietors are not averse to exhibiting their establishments. The deft touch and rapid movement of the skilful Cuban cigarmakers is interesting to most persons, and the modern machinery for turning out thousands of cigarettes in an hour would surprise a professional machinist.

Then there is the Carnival period before Lent, when all Havana lends itself to jollity, and visitors have many opportunities to observe the Cuban dancing—a dreamy sort of poetry materialised. Sundays are observed rather as feast days than solemn occasions; and then the bull-fights, theatres, circus, and opera may be enjoyed, as well as the evening music in the park. And all the time one is certain to enjoy good food, luscious fruits, excellent attendance, and the kindness of a very polite and hospitable community.

THE SOWERS.

BY HENRY SETON MERRIMAN,
AUTHOR OF 'WITH EDGED TOOLS,' ETC.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

À DEUX.

STEINMETZ laid Etta on a sofa. She was already recovering consciousness. He rang the bell twice, and all the while he kept his eye on De Chauxville. A quick touch on Etta's wrist and breast showed that this man knew something of women and of those short-lived fainting fits that belong to strong emotions.

The maid soon came.

'The Princess requires your attention,' said Steinmetz, still watching De Chauxville, who was looking at Etta and neglecting his opportunities.

Steinmetz went up to him and took him by the arm.

'Come with me,' he said.

The Frenchman could have taken advantage of the presence of the servant to effect a retreat, but he did not dare to do so. It was essential that he should obtain a few words with Etta. To effect this he was ready even to face an interview with Steinmetz. In his heart he was cursing that liability to inconvenient fainting fits that makes all women uncertain in a moment of need.

He preceded Steinmetz out of the room, forgetting even to resent the large warm grasp on his arm. They went through the long dimly-lit passage to the old part of the castle, where Steinmetz had his rooms.

'And now,' said Steinmetz, when they were alone with closed doors—'and now, De Chauxville, let us understand each other.'

De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders. He was not thinking of Steinmetz yet. He was still thinking of Etta and how he could get speech with her. With the assurance which had carried him through many a difficulty before this, the Frenchman looked round him, taking in the details of the room. They were in the apartment beyond the large smoking-room—the anteroom, as it were, to the little chamber where Paul kept his medicine-chest,

his disguise, all the compromising details of his work among the peasants. The broad writing-table in the middle of the room stood between the two men.

‘Do you imagine yourself in love with the Princess?’ asked Steinmetz suddenly, with characteristic bluntness.

‘If you like,’ returned the other.

‘If I thought that it was that,’ said the German, looking at him thoughtfully, ‘I would throw you out of the window. If it is anything else, I will only throw you downstairs.’

De Chauxville bit his thumbnail anxiously. He frowned across the table into Steinmetz’s face. In all their intercourse he had never heard that tone of voice; he had never seen quite that look on the heavy face. Was Steinmetz aroused at last? Steinmetz aroused was an unknown quantity to Claude de Chauxville.

‘I have known you now for twenty-five years,’ went on Karl Steinmetz, ‘and I cannot say that I know any good of you. But let that pass; it is not, I suppose, my business. The world is as the good God made it. I can do nothing towards bettering it. I have always known you to be a scoundrel—a fact to be deplored—and that is all. But so soon as your villainy affects my own life, then, my friend, a more active recognition of it is necessary.’

‘Indeed!’ sneered the Frenchman.

‘Your villainy has touched Paul’s life, and at that point it touches mine,’ continued Karl Steinmetz with slow anger. ‘You followed us to Petersburg—thence you dogged us to the Government of Tver. You twisted that foolish woman, the Countess Lanovitch, round your finger, and obtained from her an invitation to Thors. All this in order to be near one of us. *Ach!* I have been watching you. Is it only after twenty-five years that I at last convince you that I am not such a fool as you are pleased to consider me?’

‘You have not convinced me yet,’ put in De Chauxville with his easy laugh.

‘No, but I shall do so before I have finished with you. Now, you have not come here for nothing. It is to be near one of us. It is not Miss Delafield; she knows you. Some women—good women—have an instinct given to them by God for a defence against such men—such things as you. Is it I?’

He touched his broad chest with his two hands, and stood defying his lifelong foe.

‘Is it me that you follow? If so, I am here. Let us have done with it now.’

De Chauxville laughed. There was an uneasy look in his eyes. He did not quite understand Steinmetz. He made no answer. But he turned and looked at the window. It is possible that he suddenly remembered the threat concerning it.

‘Is it Paul?’ continued Steinmetz. ‘I think not. I think you are afraid of Paul. Remains the Princess. Unless you can convince me to the contrary, I must conclude that you are trying to get a helpless woman into your power.’

‘You always were a champion of helpless ladies,’ sneered De Chauxville.

‘Ah! You remember that, do you? I also—I remember it. It is long ago, and I have forgiven you; but I have not forgotten. What you were then you will be now. Your record is against you.’

Steinmetz was standing with his back to what appeared to be the only exit from the room. There were two other doors concealed in the oaken panels, but De Chauxville did not know that. He could not take his eyes from the broad face of his companion, upon which there were singular blotches of colour.

‘I am waiting,’ said the German, ‘for you to explain your conduct.’

‘Indeed!’ replied De Chauxville. ‘Then, my friend, you will have to continue waiting. I fail to recognise your right to make inquiry into my movements. I am not responsible to any man for my actions, least of all to you. The man who manages his neighbour’s affairs mismanages his own. I would recommend you to mind your own business. Kindly let me pass.’

De Chauxville’s words were brave enough, but his lips were unsteady. A weak mouth is apt to betray its possessor at inconvenient moments. He waved Steinmetz aside, but he made no movement towards the door. He kept the table between him and his companion.

Steinmetz was getting calmer. There was an uncanny hush about him.

‘Then I am to conclude,’ he said, ‘that you came to Russia in order to persecute a helpless woman. Her innocence or her guilt are, for the moment, beside the question. Neither is any business of yours. Both, on the contrary, are my affair. Innocent or guilty, the Princess Howard-Alexis must from this moment be freed from your persecution.’

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De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders. He tapped on the floor impatiently with the toe of his neat riding-boot.

‘*Allons!*’ he said. ‘Let me pass.’

‘Your story of Sydney Bamborough,’ went on Steinmetz, coldly, ‘was a good one wherewith to frighten a panic-stricken woman. But you brought it to the wrong person when you brought it to me. Do you suppose that I would have allowed the marriage to take place unless I knew that Bamborough was dead?’

‘You may be telling the truth about that incident, or you may not,’ said De Chauxville. ‘But my knowledge of the betrayal of the Charity League is sufficient for my purpose.’

‘Yes,’ admitted Steinmetz grimly, ‘you have information there with possibilities of mischief in it. But I shall discount most of it by telling Prince Pavlo to-night all that I know, and I know more than you do. Also, I intend to seal your lips before you leave this room.’

De Chauxville stared at him with a dropping lip. He gulped down something in his throat. His hand was stealing round under the fur jacket to a pocket at the back of his trousers.

‘Let me out!’ he hissed.

There was a gleam of bright metal in the sunlight that poured in through the window. De Chauxville raised his arm sharply, and at the same instant Steinmetz threw a book in his face. A loud report, and the room was full of smoke.

Steinmetz placed one hand on the table and, despite his weight, vaulted it cleanly. This man had taken his degree at Heidelberg, and the Germans are the finest gymnasts in the world. Moreover, muscle, once made, remains till death. It was his only chance, for the Frenchman had dodged the novel, though it had spoilt his aim. Steinmetz vaulted right on to him, and De Chauxville staggered back.

In a moment Steinmetz had him by the collar; his face was grey, his heavy eyes ablaze. If anything will rouse a man, it is being fired at point-blank at a range of four yards with a .280 revolver.

‘*Ach!*’ gasped the German; ‘you would shoot me, would you?’

He wrenched the pistol from De Chauxville’s fingers and threw it into the corner of the room. Then he shook the man like a garment.

‘First,’ he cried, ‘you would kill Paul, and now you try to

shoot me. Good God ! what are you ? You are no man. Do you know what I am going to do with you ? I am going to thrash you like a dog !'

He dragged him to the fireplace. Above the mantelpiece a stick-rack was affixed to the wall, and here were sticks and riding-whips. Steinmetz selected a heavy whip. His eyes were shot with blood ; his mouth worked beneath his moustache.

' So,' he said, ' I am going to settle with you at last.'

De Chauxville kicked and struggled, but he could not get free. He only succeeded in half-choking himself.

' You are going to swear,' said Steinmetz, ' never to approach the Princess again—never to divulge what you know of her past life.'

The Frenchman was almost blue in the face. His eyes were wild with terror.

And Karl Steinmetz thrashed him.

It did not last long. No word was spoken. The silence was only broken by their shuffling feet, by the startling report of each blow, by De Chauxville's repeated gasps of pain.

The fur jacket was torn in several places. The white shirt appeared here and there. In one place it was stained with red.

At last Steinmetz threw him huddled into one corner of the room. The chattering face, the wild eyes that looked up at him, were terrible to see.

' When you have promised to keep the secret you may go,' said Steinmetz. ' You must swear it.'

De Chauxville's lips moved, but no sound came from them. Steinmetz poured some water into a tumbler and gave it to him.

' It had to come to this,' he said, ' sooner or later. Paul would have killed you ; that is the only difference. Do you swear by God in Heaven above you that you will keep the Princess's secret ?'

' I swear it,' answered De Chauxville hoarsely.

Steinmetz was holding on to the back of a high chair with both hands, breathing heavily. His face was still livid. That which had been white in his eyes was quite red.

De Chauxville was crawling towards the revolver in the corner of the room, but he was almost fainting. It was a question whether he would last long enough to reach the firearm. There was a bright patch of red in either liver-coloured cheek ; his lips were working convulsively. And Steinmetz saw him in time. He seized him by the collar of his coat and dragged him back. He

placed his foot on the little pistol and faced De Chauxville with glaring eyes. De Chauxville rose to his feet, and for a moment the two men looked into each other's souls. The Frenchman's face was twisted with pain. No word was said.

Such was the last reckoning between Karl Steinmetz and the Baron Claude de Chauxville.

The Frenchman went slowly towards the door. He faltered, and looked round for a chair. He sat heavily down with a little exclamation of pain and exhaustion, and felt for his pocket-handkerchief. The scented cambric diffused a faint dainty odour of violets. He sat forward with his two hands on his knees, swaying a little from side to side. Presently he raised his handkerchief to his face. There were tears in his eyes.

Thus the two men waited until De Chauxville had recovered himself sufficiently to take his departure. The air was full of naked human passions. It was rather a gruesome scene.

At last the Frenchman stood slowly up, and, with characteristic thought of appearances, fingered his torn coat.

'Have you a cloak?' asked Steinmetz.

'No.'

The German went to a cupboard in the wall and selected a long riding-cloak, which he handed to the Frenchman without a word.

Thus Claude de Chauxville walked to the door in a cloak which had figured at many a Charity League meeting. Assuredly the irony of Fate is a keener thing than any poor humour we have at our command. When evil is punished in this present life there is no staying of the hand.

Steinmetz followed De Chauxville through the long passage they had traversed a few minutes earlier and down the broad staircase. The servants were waiting at the door with the horse put at the Frenchman's disposal by Paul.

De Chauxville mounted slowly, heavily, with twitching lips. His face was set and cold now. The pain was getting bearable, the wounded vanity was bleeding inwardly. In his dull eyes there was a gleam of hatred and malice. It was the face of a man rejoicing inwardly over a deep and certain vengeance.

'It is well,' he was muttering between his clenched teeth as he rode away, while Steinmetz watched him from the doorstep. 'It is well. Now I will not spare you.'

He rode down the hill and through the village with the light of the setting sun shining on a face where pain and deadly rage were fighting for the mastery.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A TALE THAT IS TOLD.

KARL STEINMETZ walked slowly upstairs to his own room. The evening sun shining through the small deeply-embasured windows fell on a face at no time joyous, now tired and worn. He sat down at his broad writing-table, and looked round the room with a little blink of the eyelids.

‘I am getting too old for this sort of thing,’ he said.

His gaze lighted on the heavy riding-whip thrown on the ground near the door where he had released Claude de Chauxville after the terrible punishment meted out to that foe with heavy Teutonic hand. Steinmetz rose, and picking up the whip with the grunt of a stout man stooping, replaced it carefully in the rack over the mantelpiece.

He stood looking out of the window for a few moments.

‘It will have to be done,’ he said resolutely, and rang the bell.

‘My compliments to the Prince,’ he said to his servant, who appeared instantly, ‘and will he come to me here?’

When Paul came into the room a few minutes later Steinmetz was standing by the fire. He turned and looked gravely at the Prince.

‘I have just kicked De Chauxville out of the house,’ he said.

The colour left Paul’s face quite suddenly.

‘Why?’ he asked with hard eyes. He had begun to distrust Etta, and there is nothing so hard to stop as the growth of distrust. Steinmetz did not answer at once.

‘Was it not *my* privilege?’ asked Paul with a grim smile. There are some smiles more terrible than any frown.

‘No,’ answered Steinmetz; ‘I think not. It is not as bad as that. But it is bad enough, *mein lieber!*—it is bad enough! I horsewhipped him first for myself. *Gott!* how pleasant that was! And then I kicked him out for you.’

‘Why?’ repeated Paul with a white face.

‘It is a long story,’ answered Steinmetz without looking at him. ‘He knows too much.’

‘About whom?’

‘About all of us.’

Paul walked away to the window. He stood looking out, his hands thrust into the side-pockets of his jacket, his broad back turned uncompromisingly upon his companion.

'Tell me the story,' he said. 'You need not hurry over it. You need not trouble to—spare me. Only let it be quite complete—once for all.'

Steinmetz winced. He knew the expression of the face that was looking out of the window.

'This man has hated me all his life,' he said. 'It began as such things usually do between men—about a woman. It was years ago. I got the better of him, and the good God got the better of me. She died, and De Chauxville forgot her. I—have not forgotten her. But I have tried to do so. It is a slow process, and I have made very little progress; but all that is my affair and beside the question. I merely mention it to show you that De Chauxville had a grudge against me—'

'This is no time for mistaken charity,' interrupted Paul. 'Do not try to screen anybody. I shall see through it.'

There was a little pause. Never had that silent room been so noiseless.

'In after-life,' Steinmetz went on, 'it was our fate to be at variance several times. Our mutual dislike has had no opportunity of diminishing. It seems that, before you married, De Chauxville was pleased to consider himself in love with Mrs. Sydney Bamborough. Whether he had any right to think himself ill-used I do not know. Such matters are usually known to two persons only, and imperfectly by them. It would appear that the wound to his vanity was serious. It developed into a thirst for revenge. He looked about for some means to do you harm. He communicated with your enemies, and allied himself to such men as Vassili of Paris. He followed us to Petersburg, and then he had a stroke of good fortune. He found out—who betrayed the Charity League!'

Paul turned slowly round. In his eyes there burned a dull, hungering fire. Men have seen such a look in the eyes of a beast of prey, driven, famished, cornered at last, and at last face to face with its foe.

'Ah! He knows that!' he said slowly.

'Yes, God help us! he knows that.'

'And who was it?'

Steinmetz moved uneasily from one foot to the other.

'It was a woman,' he said.

'A woman!'

'A woman—you know,' said Steinmetz slowly.

'Good God! Catrina!'

'No, not Catrina.'

'Then who?' cried Paul hoarsely. His hands fell heavily on the table.

'Your wife.'

Paul knew before the words were spoken.

He turned again, and stood looking out of the window with his hands thrust into his pockets. He stood there for whole minutes in an awful stillness. The clock on the mantelpiece, a little travelling timepiece, ticked in a hurried way, as if anxious to get on. Down beneath them, somewhere in the courtyards of the great castle, a dog—a deep-voiced wolf-hound—was baying persistently and nervously, listening for the echo of its own voice amid the pines of the desert forest.

Steinmetz watched Paul's motionless back with a sort of fascination. He moved uneasily, as if to break a spell of silence almost unbearable in its tensity. He went to the table and sat down. From mere habit he took up a quill pen. He looked at the point of it and at the inkstand. But he had nothing to write. There was nothing to say.

He laid the pen aside, and sat leaning his broad head upon the palm of his hand, his two elbows on the table. Paul never moved. Steinmetz waited. His own life had been no great success. He had had much to bear, and he had borne it. He was wondering heavily whether any of it had been as bad as what Paul was bearing now while he looked out of the window with his hands in his pockets, saying nothing.

At length Paul moved. He turned, and, coming towards the table, laid his hand on Steinmetz's broad shoulder.

'Are you sure of it?' he asked in a voice that did not sound like his own at all—a hollow voice like that of an old man.

'Quite; I have it from Stepán Lanovitch—from the Princess herself.'

They remained thus for a moment. Then Paul withdrew his hand, and walked slowly to the window.

'Tell me,' he said, 'how she did it.'

Steinmetz was playing with the quill pen again. It is singular how at great moments we perform trivial acts, think trivial

thoughts. He dipped the pen in the ink, and made a pattern on the blotting-pad with dots.

'It was an organised plan between husband and wife,' he said. 'Bamborough turned up at Thors and asked for a night's lodging on the strength of a very small acquaintance. He stole the papers from Stepán's study and took them to Tver, where his wife was waiting for them. She took them on to Paris and sold them to Vassili. Bamborough began his journey eastward, knowing presumably that he could not escape by the western frontier, but lost his way on the steppe. You remember the man whom we picked up between here and Tver with his face all cut to pieces?—he had been dragged by the stirrup. That was Sydney Bamborough. The good God had hit back quickly.'

'How long have you known this?' asked Paul in a queer voice.

'I saw it suddenly in the Princess's face, one day in Petersburg—a sort of revelation. I read it there, and she saw me reading. I should have liked to keep it from you, for your sake as well as for hers. Our daily life is made possible only by the fact that we know so little of our neighbours. There are many things of which we are better ignorant right up to the end. This might have been one of them. But De Chauxville found it out, and it is better that I should tell you than he.'

Paul did not look round. The wolf-hound was still barking at its own echo—a favourite pastime of those who make a great local stir in the world.

'Of course,' said Paul after a long pause, 'I have been a great fool. I know that. But—'

He turned and looked at Steinmetz with haggard eyes.

'But I would rather go on being a fool than suspect anyone of a deception like this.'

Steinmetz was still making patterns on the blotting-pad.

'It is difficult for us men,' he said slowly, 'to look at these things from a woman's point of view. They hold a different sense of honour from ours—especially if they are beautiful. And the fault is ours—especially towards the beautiful ones. There may have been temptations of which we are ignorant.'

Paul was still looking at him. Steinmetz looked up slowly, and saw that he had grown ten years older in the last few minutes. He did not look at him for more than a second, because the sight of Paul's face hurt him. But he saw in that moment that Paul

did not understand. This strong man, hard in his youthful strength of limb and purpose, would be just, but nothing more. And between man and man it is not always justice that is required. Between man and woman justice rarely meets the difficulty.

‘Comprendre c'est pardonner,’ quoted Steinmetz vaguely.

He hesitated to interfere between Paul and his wife. Axioms are made for crucial moments. A man's life has been steered by a proverb before this. Some, who have no religion, steer by them all the voyage.

Paul walked slowly to the chair he usually occupied, opposite to Steinmetz, at the writing-table. He walked and sat down as if he had travelled a long distance.

‘What is to be done?’ asked Steinmetz.

‘I do not know. I do not think that it matters much. What do you recommend?’

‘There is so much to be done,’ answered Steinmetz, ‘that it is difficult to know what to do first. We must not forget that De Chauxville is furious. He will do all the harm of which he is capable at once. We must not forget that the country is in a state of smouldering revolt, and that we have two women, two English ladies, entrusted to our care.’

Paul moved uneasily in his chair. His companion had struck the right note. This large man was happiest when he was tiring himself out.

‘Yes; but about Etta?’ he said.

And the sound of his voice made Steinmetz wince. There is nothing so heartrending as the sight of dumb suffering.

‘You must see her,’ answered he, reflectively. ‘You must see her, of course. She may be able to explain.’

He looked across the table beneath his shaggy grey eyebrows. Paul did not at that moment look a likely subject for explanations, even the explanations of a beautiful woman. But there was one human quantity which, in all his experience, Karl Steinmetz had never successfully gauged--namely, the extent of a woman's power over the man who loves, or, at one time, has loved her.

‘She cannot explain away Stepán Lanovitch's ruined life. She can hardly explain away a thousand deaths from unnatural causes every winter in this province alone.’

This was what Steinmetz dreaded—justice.

‘Give her the opportunity,’ he said.

Paul was looking out of the window. His singularly firm mouth was still and quiet—not a mouth for explanations.

‘I will if you like,’ he said.

‘I do like, Paul. I beg of you to do it. And remember that—she is not a man.’

This, like other appeals of the same nature, fell on stony ground. Paul simply did not understand it. In all the years of his work among the peasants it is possible that some well-spring of conventional charity had been dried up—scorched in the glare of burning injustice. He was not at this moment in a mood to consider the only excuse that Steinmetz seemed to be able to urge.

The sun had set long ago. The short twilight lay over the snow-covered land with a chill hopelessness. Steinmetz looked at his watch. They had been together an hour—one of those hours that count as years in a lifetime. He had to peer into the face of the watch in order to see the hands. The room was almost dark, and no servant ever came to it unless summoned.

Paul was looking down at his companion as if waiting to hear the time. At great moments we are suddenly brought face to face with the limits of human nature. It is at such moments that we find that we are not gods, but only men. We can only feel to a certain extent, only suffer up to a certain point.

‘We must dress for dinner,’ said Steinmetz. ‘Afterwards—well, afterwards we shall see.’

‘Yes,’ answered Paul. And he did not go.

The two men stood looking at each other for a moment. They had passed through much together—danger, excitement, and now they were dabbling in sorrow. It would appear that this same sorrow runs like a river across the road of our life. Some of us find the ford and splash through the shallows—shallows ourselves—while others flounder into deep water. These are they who look right on to the greater events, and fail to note the trivial details of each little step. Paul was wading through the deep water, and this good friend of his was not inclined to stand upon the bank. It is while passing through this river that Fortune sends some of us a friend, who is ever afterwards different from all others.

Paul stood looking down at the broad, heavy face of the man who loved him like a father. It was not easy for him to speak. He seemed to be making an effort.

'I do not want you to think,' he said at last, 'that it is as bad as it might have been. It might have been worse, much worse, had I not made a mistake in regard to my own feelings when I married her. I will try and do the right thing by her. Only, at present there does not seem to be much left, except you.'

Steinmetz looked up with his quaintly resigned smile.

'Ah, yes,' he said, 'I am there always.'

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

KARL STEINMETZ had shown the depth of his knowledge of men and women when he commented on that power of facing danger with an unruffled countenance which he was pleased to attribute to English ladies above all women. During the evening he had full opportunity of verifying his own observations.

Etta came down to dinner smiling and imperturbable. On the threshold of the drawing-room she exchanged a glance with Karl Steinmetz; and that was all. At dinner it was Maggie and Paul who were silent. Etta talked to Steinmetz—brightly, gaily, with a certain courage of a very high order; for she was desperate, and she did not show it.

At last the evening came to an end. Maggie had sung two songs. Steinmetz had performed on the piano with a marvellous touch. All had played their parts with the brazen faces which Steinmetz in his knowledge of many nations assigned to the Anglo-Saxon race before others.

At last Etta rose to go to bed, with a little sharp sigh of great suspense. It was coming.

She went up to her room, bidding Maggie good-night in the passage. In a mechanical way she allowed the deaf-handed maid to array her in a dressing-gown—soft, silken, a dainty triumph in its way. Then, almost impatiently, she sent the maid away when her hair was only half released. She would brush it herself. She was tired. No, she wanted nothing more.

She sat down by the fire, brush in hand. She could hardly breathe. It was coming.

She heard Paul come to his dressing-room. She heard his deep, quiet voice reply to some question of his valet's. Then the

word 'Good-night' in the same quiet voice. The valet had gone. There was only the door now between her and—what? Her fingers were at the throat of her dressing-gown. The soft lace seemed to choke her.

Then Paul knocked at the door. It was coming. She opened her lips, but at first could make no sound.

'Come in,' she said at length, hoarsely.

She wondered whether he would kill her. She wondered whether she was in love with her husband. She had begun wondering that lately; she was wondering it when he came in. He had changed his dress-coat for a silk-faced jacket in which he was in the habit of working with Steinmetz in the quiet room after the household had gone to bed.

She looked up. She dropped the brush, and ran towards him with a great rustle of her flowing silks.

'Oh, Paul, what is it?' she cried.

She stopped short, not daring to touch him, before his cold, set face.

'Have you seen anyone?' she whispered.

'Only De Chauxville,' he answered, 'this afternoon.'

'Indeed, Paul,' she protested hastily, 'it was nothing. A message from Catrina Lanovitch. It was only the usual visit of an acquaintance. It would have been very strange if he had not called. Do you think I could care for a man like that?'

'I never did think so until now,' returned Paul steadily. 'Your excuses accuse you. You may care for him. I do not know; I—do—not—care.'

She turned slowly and went back to her chair. Mechanically she took up the brush and shook back her beautiful hair.

'You mean you do not care for me,' she said. 'Oh, Paul, be careful.'

Paul stood looking at her. He was not a subtle-minded man at all. He was not one of those who take it upon themselves to say that they understand women—using the word in an offensively general sense—as if women were situated midway between the human and the animal races. He was old-fashioned enough to look upon women as higher and purer than men, while equally capable of thought and self-control. He had, it must be remembered, no great taste for fictional literature. He had not read the voluminous lucubrations of the modern woman-writer. He had not assisted at the nauseating spectacle of a woman

morally turning herself inside out in three volumes and an interview.

No—this man respected women still; and he paid them an honour which, thank Heaven! most of them still deserve. He treated them as men in the sense that he considered them to be under the same code of right and wrong, of good and evil.

He did not understand what Etta meant when she told him to be careful. He did not know that the modern social code is like the Spanish grammar—there are so many exceptions that the rules are hardly worth noting. And one of our most notorious modern exceptions is the married woman who is pleased to hold herself excused because outsiders tell her that her husband does not understand her.

‘I do not think,’ said Paul judicially, ‘that you can have cared very much whether I loved you or not. When you married me you knew that I was the promoter of the Charity League; I almost told you. I told you so much that with your knowledge you must have been aware of the fact that I was heavily interested in the undertaking which you betrayed. You married me without certain proof of your husband’s death, such was your indecent haste to call yourself a princess. And now I find, on your own confession, that you have a clandestine understanding with a man who tried to murder me only a week ago. Is it not rather absurd to talk of caring?’

He stood looking down at her—cold and terrible in the white heat of his suppressed Northern anger.

The little clock on the mantelpiece, in a terrible hurry, ticked with all its might. Time was speeding. Every moment was against her. And she could think of nothing to say, simply because those things that she would have said to others would carry no weight with this man.

Etta was leaning forward in the luxurious chair, staring with haggard eyes into the fire. The flames leapt up and gleamed on her pale face, in her deep eyes.

‘I suppose,’ she said, without looking at him, ‘that you will not believe me when I tell you that I hate the man. I knew nothing of what you refer to as happening last week—his attempt to murder you, I mean. You are a prince, and all-powerful in your own province. Can you not throw him into prison and keep him there? Such things are done in Russia. He is more dangerous than you think. Please do it—please—’

Paul looked at her with hard, unresponsive eyes. Lives depended on his answer.

'I did not come here to discuss Claude de Chauxville,' he said, 'but you, and our future.'

Etta drew herself up as one under the lash, and waited with set teeth.

'I propose,' he said, in a final voice which made it no proposition at all, 'that you go home to England at once with—your cousin. This country is not safe for you. The house in London will be at your disposal. I will make a suitable settlement on you, sufficient to live in accordance with your title and position. I must ask you to remember that the name you bear has hitherto been an unsullied one. We have been proud of our princesses—up to now. In case of any trouble reaching you from outside sources connected with this country I should like you to remember that you are under my protection and that of Steinmetz. Either of us will be glad at any time to consider any appeal for assistance that you may think fit to make. You will always be the Princess Howard-Alexis.'

Etta gave a sudden laugh.

'Oh, yes,' she said, and her face was strangely red, 'I shall still be the Princess Alexis.'

'With sufficient money to keep up the position,' he went on, with the cruel irony of a slow-spoken man.

A queer twisted smile passed across Etta's face—the smile of one who is in agony and will not shriek.

'There are certain stipulations which I must make in self-defence,' went on Paul. 'I must ask you to cease all communication of whatsoever nature with the Baron de Chauxville. I am not jealous of him—now. I do not know why.'

He paused, as if wondering what the meaning of this might be. Etta knew it. The knowledge was part of her punishment.

'But,' continued her husband, 'I am not going to sacrifice the name my mother bore to the vanity of a French coxcomb. You will be kind enough to avoid all society where it is likely that you should meet him. If you disregard my desires in this matter I shall be compelled to take means to enforce them.'

'What means?'

'I shall reduce your allowance.'

Their eyes met, and perhaps that was the bitterest moment in Etta's life. Dead things are better put out of sight at once.

Etta felt that Paul's dead love would grin at her in every sovereign of the allowance which was to be hers. She would never get away from it, she could never shake off its memory.

'Am I to live alone?' asked Etta, suddenly finding her voice.

'That is as you like,' answered Paul, perhaps purposely misunderstanding her. 'You are at liberty to have any friends or companion you wish. Perhaps—your cousin.'

'Maggie?'

'Yes,' answered Paul. For the first time since he had entered the room his eyes were averted from Etta's face.

'She would not live with me,' said the Princess curtly.

Paul seemed to be reflecting. When he next spoke it was in a kinder voice.

'You need not tell the circumstances which have given rise to this—arrangement.'

Etta shrugged her shoulders.

'That,' went on Paul, 'rests entirely with yourself. You may be sure that I will tell no one. I am not likely to discuss it with anyone whosoever.'

Etta's stony eyes softened for a moment. She seemed to be alternating between hatred of this man and love of him—a dangerous state for any woman. It is possible that if he had held his hand out to her she would have been at his feet in a wild incoherent passion of self-hatred and abasement. Such moments as these turn our lives and determine them. Paul knew nothing of the issue hanging on this moment, on the passing softness of her eyes. He knew nothing of the danger in which this woman stood, of the temptation with which she was wrestling. He went on in his blindness, went on being only just.

'If,' he said, 'you have any further questions to ask, I shall always be at your service. For the next few days I shall be busy. The peasants are in a state of discontent verging on rebellion. We cannot at present arrange for your journey to Tver, but as soon as it is possible I will tell you.'

He looked at the clock, and made an imperceptible movement towards the door.

Etta glanced up sharply. She did not seem to be breathing.

'Is that all?' she asked in a dull voice.

There was a long silence, tense and throbbing, the great silence of the steppe.

'I think so,' answered Paul at length. 'I have tried to be just.'

'Then justice is very cruel.'

'Not so cruel as the woman who for a few pounds sells the happiness of thousands of human beings. Steinmetz advised me to speak to you. He suggested the possibility of circumstances of which we are ignorant. He said that you might be able to explain.'

Silence.

'Can you explain?'

Silence. Etta sat looking into the fire. The little clock hurried on. At length Etta drew a deep breath.

'You are the sort of man,' she said, 'who does not understand temptation. You are strong. The devil leaves the strong in peace. You have found virtue easy because you have never wanted money. Your position has always been assured. Your name alone is a password through the world. Your sort are always hard on women who—who—— What have I done, after all?'

Some instinct bade her rise to her feet and stand before him, tall, beautiful, passionate, a woman in a thousand, a fit mate for such as he. Her beautiful hair in burnished glory round her face gleamed in the firelight. Her white fingers clenched, her arms thrown back, her breast panting beneath the lace, her proud face looking defiance into his—no one but a prince could have braved this princess.

'What have I done?' she cried a second time. 'I have only fought for myself, and if I have won, so much the greater credit. I am your wife. I have done nothing the law can touch. Thousands of women moving in our circle are not half so good as I am. I swear before God I am——'

'Hush!' he said, with upraised hand. 'I never doubted that.'

'I will do anything you wish,' she went on—and in her humility she was very dangerous. 'I deceived you, I know. But I sold the Charity League before I knew that you—that you thought of me. When I married you I didn't love you. I admit that. But Paul, oh, Paul! if you were not so good you would understand.'

Perhaps he did understand; for there was that in her eyes that made her meaning clear.

He was silent, standing before her in his great strength, his marvellous and cruel self-restraint.

‘ You will not forgive me ? ’

For a moment she leant forward, peering into his face. He seemed to be reflecting.

‘ Yes,’ he said at length, ‘ I forgive you. But if I cared for you forgiveness would be impossible.’

He went slowly towards the door. Etta looked round the room with drawn eyes ; their room—the room he had fitted up for his bride with the lavishness of a great wealth and a great love.

He paused with his hand on the door.

‘ And,’ she said with fiery cheeks, ‘ does your forgiveness date from to-night ? ’

‘ Yes ! ’

He opened the door.

‘ Good-night ! ’ he said, and went out.

C H A P T E R X L.

STEPÁN RETURNS.

AT daybreak the next morning Karl Steinmetz was awakened by the familiar cry of the wolf beneath his window. He rose and dressed hastily. The eastern sky was faintly pink ; a rosy twilight moved among the pines. He went downstairs and opened the little door at the back of the castle.

It was, of course, the Starosta, shivering and bleached in the chilly dawn.

‘ They have watched my cottage, Excellency, all night. It was only now that I could get away. There are two strange sleighs outside Domensky’s hut. There are marks of many sleighs that have been and gone. Excellency, it is unsafe for anyone to venture outside the castle to-day. You must send to Tver for the soldiers.’

‘ The Prince refuses to do that.’

‘ But why, Excellency ? We shall be killed.’

‘ You do not know the effect of platoon firing on a closely packed mob, Starost. The Prince does,’ replied Steinmetz, with his grim smile.

They spoke together in hushed voices for half an hour while the daylight crept up the eastern sky. Then the Starosta stole away among the still larches, like the wolf whose cry he imitated so perfectly.

Steinmetz closed the door and went upstairs to his own room, his face grave and thoughtful, his tread heavy with the weight of anxiety.

The day passed as such days do. Etta was not the woman to plead a conventional headache and remain hidden. She came down to breakfast, and during that meal was boldly conversational.

'She has spirit,' reflected Karl Steinmetz behind his quiet grey eyes. He admired her for it, and helped her. He threw back the ball of conversation with imperturbable good-humour.

They were completely shut in. No news from the outer world penetrated to the little party besieged within their own stone walls. Maggie, fearless and innocent, announced her intention of snow-shoeing, but was dissuaded therefrom by Steinmetz with covert warnings.

During the morning each was occupied in individual affairs. At luncheon-time they met again. Etta was now almost defiant. She was on her mettle. She was so near to loving Paul that a hatred of him welled up within her breast whenever he repelled her advances with uncompromising reticence.

They did not know—perhaps she hardly knew herself—that the opening of the side-door depended upon her humour.

In the afternoon Etta and Maggie sat, as was their wont, in the morning-room looking out over the cliff. Of late their intercourse had been slightly strained. They had never had much in common, although circumstances had thrown their lives together.

It is one of the ills to which women are heir that they have frequently to pass their whole lives in the society of persons with whom they have no real sympathy. Both these women were conscious of the little rift within the lute, but such rifts are better treated with silence. That which comes to interfere with a woman's friendship will not often bear discussion.

At dusk Steinmetz went out. He had an appointment with the Starosta.

Paul was sitting in his own room, making a pretence of work, about five o'clock when Steinmetz came hurriedly to him.

'A new development,' he said shortly. 'Come to my room.'

Paul rose and followed him through the double doorway built in the thickness of the wall.

Steinmetz's large room was lighted only by a lamp standing

on the table. All the light was thrown on the desk by a large green shade, leaving the rest of the room in a semi-darkness.

At the far end of the room a man was standing in an expectant attitude. There was something furtive about this intruder, and at the same time familiar to Paul, who peered at him through the gloom.

Then the man came hurriedly forward.

‘Ah, Pavlo, Pavlo!’ he said in a deep, hollow voice. ‘I could not expect you to know me.’

He threw his arms around him, and embraced him after the simple manner of Russia. Then he held him at arms’ length.

‘Stepán!’ said Paul. ‘No, I did not know you.’

Stepán Lanovitch was still holding him at arms’ length, examining him with the large faint blue eyes which so often go with an exaggerated philanthropy.

‘Old,’ he muttered, ‘old. Ah, my poor Pavlo. I heard in Kiew—you know how we outlaws hear such things—that you were in trouble, so I came to you.’

Steinmetz in the background raised his patient eyebrows.

‘There are two men in the world,’ went on the voluble Lanovitch, ‘who can manage the moujiks of Tver—you and I; so I came. I will help you, Pavlo; I will stand by you. Together we can assuredly quell this revolt.’

Paul nodded, and allowed himself to be embraced a second time. He had long known Stepán Lanovitch of Thors as one of the many who go about the world doing good with their eyes shut. For the moment he had absolutely no use for this well-meaning blunderer.

‘I am afraid,’ he said, ‘that it has got beyond control. We cannot stamp it out now except by force, and I would rather not do that. Our only hope is that it may burn itself out. The talkers must get hoarse in time.’

Lanovitch shook his head.

‘They have been talking since the days of Ananias,’ he said, ‘and they are not hoarse yet. I fear, Pavlo, there will never be peace in the world until the talkers are hoarse.’

‘How did you get here?’ asked Paul, who was always businesslike.

‘I brought a pack on my back and sold cotton. I made myself known to the Starosta, and he communicated with good Karl here.’

'Did you learn anything in the village?' asked Paul.

'No; they suspected me. They would not talk. But I understand them, Pavlo, these poor simple fools. A pebble in the stream would turn the current of their convictions. Tell them who is the Moscow Doctor. It is your only chance.'

Steinmetz grunted acquiescence and walked wearily to the window. This was only an old and futile argument of his own.

'And make it impossible for me to live another day among them,' said Paul. 'Do you think St. Petersburg would countenance a prince who works among his moujiks?'

Stepán Lanovitch's pale blue eyes looked troubled. Steinmetz shrugged his shoulders.

'They have brought it on themselves,' he said.

'As much as a lamb brings the knife upon itself by growing up,' replied Paul.

Lanovitch shook his white head with a tolerant little smile. He loved these poor helpless peasants with a love as large as and a thousand times less practical than Paul's.

In the meantime Paul was thinking in his clear, direct way. It was this man's habit in life and in thought to walk straight past the side issues.

'It is like you, Stepán,' he said at length, 'to come to us at this time. We feel it, and we recognise the generosity of it, for Steinmetz and I know the danger you are running in coming back to this country. But we cannot let you do it—— No, do not protest. It is quite out of the question. We might quell the revolt; no doubt we should—the two of us together. But what would happen afterwards? You would be sent back to Siberia, and I should probably follow you for harbouring an escaped convict.'

The face of the impulsive philanthropist dropped pathetically. He had come to his friend's assistance on the spur of the moment. He was destined, as some men are, to plunge about the world seeking to do good. And it has been decreed that good must be done by stealth and after deliberation only. He who does good on the spur of the moment usually sows a seed of dissension in the trench of time.

'Also,' went on Paul, with that deliberate grasp of the situation which never failed to astonish the ready-witted Steinmetz—'also, you have other calls upon your energy. You have other work to do.'

Lanovitch's broad face lightened up; his benevolent brow beamed. His capacity for work had brought him to the shoemaker's last in Tomsk. It is a vice that grows with indulgence.

'It has pleased the Authorities,' went on Paul, who was shy of religious turns of phrase, 'to give us all our own troubles. Mine—such as they are, Stepán—must be managed by myself. Yours can be faced by no one but you. You have come at the right moment. You do not quite realise what your coming means to Catrina.'

'Catrina! Ah!'

The weak blue eyes looked into the strong face and read nothing there.

'I doubt,' said Paul, 'whether it is right for you to continue sacrificing Catrina for the sake of the little good that you are able to do. You are hampered in your good work to such an extent that the result is very small, while the pain you give is very great.'

'But is that so, Pavlo? Is my child unhappy?'

'I fear so,' replied Paul gravely, with his baffling self-restraint. 'She has not much in common with her mother, you understand.'

'Ah, yes.'

'It is you to whom she is attached. Sometimes it is so with children and parents. One cannot tell why.'

Steinmetz looked as if he could supply information upon the subject; but he remained silent, standing, as it were, in an acquiescent attitude.

'You have fought your fight,' said Paul. 'A good fight, too. You have struck your blow for the country. You have sown your seed, but the harvest is not yet. Now it is time to think of your own safety, of the happiness of your own child.'

Stepán Lanovitch turned away and sat heavily down. He leant his two arms on the table and his chin upon his clenched hands.

'Why not leave the country now; at all events for a few years?' went on Paul; and when a man who is accustomed to command stoops to persuade, it is strong persuasion that he wields. 'You can take Catrina with you. You will be assuring her happiness, which, at all events, is something tangible—a present harvest! I will drive over to Thors now and bring her back. You can leave to-night and go to America.'

Stepán Lanovitch raised his head and looked hard into Paul's face.

' You wish it ? '

' I think,' answered Paul steadily, ' that it is for Catrina's happiness.'

Then Lanovitch rose up and took Paul's hand in his work-stained grip.

' Go, my son. It will be a great happiness to me. I will wait here,' he said.

Paul went straight to the door. He was a man with a capacity for prompt action, which seemed to rise to demand. Steinmetz followed him out into the passage and took him by the arm.

' You cannot do it,' he said.

' Yes, I can,' replied Paul. ' I can find my way through the forest. No one will venture to follow me there in the dark.'

Steinmetz hesitated, shrugged his shoulders, and went back into the room.

The ladies at Thors were dressed for dinner, were, indeed, awaiting the announcement of that meal, when Paul broke in upon their solitude. He did not pause to lay aside his furs, but went into the long low room, withdrawing his seal gloves painfully, for it was freezing as it only can freeze in March.

The Countess assailed him with many questions, more or less sensible, which he endured patiently until the servant had left the room. Catrina, with flushed cheeks, stood looking at him, but said nothing.

Paul withdrew his gloves and submitted to the Countess's futile tugs at his fur coat. Then Catrina spoke.

' The Comte de Chauxville has left us,' she said, without knowing exactly why.

For the moment Paul had forgotten Claude de Chauxville's existence.

' I have news for you,' he said ; and he gently pushed the chattering Countess aside. ' Stepán Lanovitch is at Osterno. He arrived to-night.'

' Ah, they have set him free, poor man ! Does he wear chains on his ankles—is his hair long ? My poor Stepán ! Ah, but what a stupid man ! '

The Countess collapsed into a soft chair. She chose a soft one obviously. It has to be recorded here that she did not receive the news with unmitigated joy.

'When he was in Siberia,' she gasped, 'one knew at all events where he was ; and now, *mon Dieu !* what an anxiety !'

'I have come over to see whether you will join him to-night and go with him to America,' said Paul, looking at her.

'To—America—to-night ! My dear Paul, are you mad ? One cannot do such things as that. America ! that is across the sea.'

'Yes,' answered Paul.

'And I am such a bad sailor. Now, if it had been Paris—'

'But it cannot be,' interrupted Paul. 'Will you join your father to-night ?' he added, turning to Catrina.

The girl was looking at him with something in her eyes that he did not care to meet.

'And go to America ?' she asked in a lifeless voice.

Paul nodded.

Catrina turned suddenly away from him and walked to the fire, where she stood with her back towards him—a small uncouth figure in black and green, the lamplight gleaming on her wonderful hair. She turned suddenly again, and, coming back, stood looking into his face.

'I will go,' she said. 'You think it best ?'

'Yes,' he answered ; 'I think it best.'

She drew a sharp breath, and was about to speak, when the Countess interrupted her.

'What !' she cried. 'You are going away to-night like this, without any luggage ? And pray what is to become of me ?'

'You can join them in America,' said Paul in his quietest tone. 'Or you can live in Paris, at last.'

(To be continued.)

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